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Ferreira**

**Filmes sobre a Escola & Educação- uma
investigação artístico-cultural**

**School Films & Education - cultural and artistic
investigations**



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Tese apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Línguas, Literaturas e Culturas realizada sob a orientação científica do Doutor Anthony David Barker, Professor Associado do Departamento de Línguas, Literaturas e Culturas da Universidade de Aveiro.

o júri

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Agradecimentos

Agradeço ao Senhor Professor Doutor Anthony David Barker, por ter aceitado ser meu orientador e supervisor. Estou-lhe grata por me ter ouvido pacientemente, por ter respeitado o meu ritmo de trabalho, por ter lido, criticado e aperfeiçoado a minha dissertação. Agradeço-lhe também a sua generosidade e espírito de partilha, foi um privilégio ter trabalhado consigo. Fica também registada aqui uma palavra de reconhecimento ao Professor David Callahan.

Este trabalho é dedicado a si, Anthony David Barker, um Professor carismático e muito humano.

Agradeço muito aos meus familiares e aos meus verdadeiros amigos, especialmente à minha irmã, à minha filha e aos meus pais.

I'd very much like to thank Dr. Anthony David Barker, a man of wisdom, insight and generosity. To thee I dedicate Yeats:

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half-light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet;
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet,
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

Palavras-chave Escola, filmes, educação, cultura.

Resumo

Esta dissertação visa questionar as representações da escola através da cultura fílmica anglófona produzida entre 1960 e 2006. Os filmes selecionados são o ponto de partida para uma reflexão sobre educação, pedagogia e cultura através das lentes críticas de alguns cineastas britânicos e americanos. Deste modo, os filmes apresentados foram desconstruídos e analisados através de um hipotético diálogo entre a ficção e a realidade e o meta-diálogo ficção-ficção, tendo como estratégia o contraste e a comparação dos textos fílmicos de épocas díspares, contudo transtemporais e transculturais. Sem deixarmos de valorizar o contexto histórico-cultural de cada texto fílmico em particular, tentámos extrair deste as lições mais universais quanto ao fenómeno educativo, estabelecendo através do cinema uma ligação pedagógica e cultural entre as lições do passado, do presente e as possíveis num futuro. Desta feita, este trabalho pretende valorizar o contributo dos *filmes sobre a escola* para o debate educativo e pedagógico, enquanto documentos culturais que registam idiosincrasias e estereótipos.

Keywords School, films, education, culture.

Abstract

This dissertation questions the Anglophone film school representations portrayed in cinema since 1960 until 2006. The set of films chosen aim to open the debate around education, pedagogy and culture via the fictional realities captured by the lenses of a few British and American filmmakers. The films studied were deconstructed and analyzed through an hypothetical dialogue between fiction and reality and the meta-dialogue fiction-fiction, relying on the strategy of contrast and comparison of different transtemporal and transcultural epochs. Despite not overlooking the particular historical and cultural *hic et nunc* of the filmic products, I've tried to extract the most universal lessons as far as the educational phenomenon is concerned, using cinema to establish bridges among the lessons of the past, the lessons of the present and the lessons of the future-to-be. Hence, this dissertation wishes to value the role of the school film subgenre within the educational and pedagogic debate, considering it valuable cultural documentation about school idiosyncrasies and stereotypes.

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Introduction

“Most screenwriters have never discovered a mummy’s tomb or defused a nuclear device but that does not prevent them from taking up these subjects in their work. Conversely, they **all** have been to school.”¹

Anthony David Barker

Nowadays, almost every person goes to school without thinking about the past, when formal school and cultural education were a privilege for those who were born into rich families or those who embraced the religious life with devotion and sacrifice. Fortunately, times have changed, social policy has evolved and education has become a social right for most young people, in fact it is now universally understood as an important and essential factor for individual and social growth. The winds of change have varied a little according to the historical and social background, but one thing we may acknowledge today: most evolved countries agree that school education is vital for the development of a country’s welfare.

Over the years, many investigators have directed their research towards the complexity of school life, tracing its historical background, its social controversies, its successes and failures, as well as posing hermeneutic questions about the teaching and learning processes, which in many respects still remain mysterious, even to contemporary sophisticated post-modern educators.

Bearing in mind that “School is something that all writers, directors and producers have had a good 12 to 15 years of experience of as pupils”² one shouldn’t be surprised by the number of films that have made school life part of their plots. Focusing on the twentieth century and on feature-length films only, one could single out as relevant screen culture school movies: *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* (1939), *Blackboard Jungle* (1955), *The Miracle Worker*

¹ Barker, Anthony David, *On Language Structure, Acquisition and Teaching*, Studies in Honour of Janusz Arabski on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday, edited by Maria Wysocka, 2009, p 399.

² Ibid, p 399

(1962), *To Sir, With Love* (1967), *If....* (1968), *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969), *Children of a Lesser God* (1986), *Stand and Deliver* (1988), *Dead Poets Society* (1989), *Dangerous Minds* (1995), *Mr. Holland's Opus* (1995), *One Eight Seven* (1997), *The Emperor's Club* (2002), *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003) and *The History Boys* (2006).

From the relevant set of screen documents presented, I have selected the ones that allow an overview of the school institution in diverse places and decades, of teachers and their perennial endeavours, of the students and their (un)predictable behaviour as well as of education and its fundamental role over the last few decades. Therefore, the films that I will analyse fall into four categories, the first *the cycle of violence*, pointing out the rise in violence in mainstream state schools; the second, *private and public reel visions*, reflecting on the dichotomy private/state schools; the third, *screen literacy*, focusing on the role of screen culture as material to encourage mature debate about the form and function of modern education and, finally, the fourth category will dwell on the lessons of screen culture's groping towards a conception of special education, and attitudes towards disabilities. Thus, my film analysis includes in the first category: *To Sir with Love* (1967), *IF....*, (1968), *Stand and Deliver* (1988), *Dangerous Minds* (1995) and *One Eight Seven* (1997); in the second category: *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969), *Dead Poets Society* (1989) and *The Emperor's Club* (2002); in the third category: *The History Boys* (2006) and finally in the fourth category *The Miracle Worker* (1962) and *Children of a Lesser God* (1986). There will also be room for a fifth section that will focus on the future school, where I will pose a few of the educational questions cinema could fictionally preview.

After viewing all these films one idea can be singled out – the school is a stage, just like the world is a stage in Shakespearean terms, in other words a social institution with a huge range of variables. There are different players and different scenarios on the stage of education: the teachers, the pupils, the staff, the directors, the schools themselves, the

subjects, school activities, the curricula, the “entrances and exits” of a great number of people and their own personal show interacting or interfering with other people’s shows. The eternal struggles for power, recognition and survival seem constant, inevitably there are choices and compromises without which leadership and governing cannot flourish.

The twentieth century has undoubtedly valued education, by allowing and compelling children from all social backgrounds to attend school institutions and thus changing state school’s priorities in order to address a new mass audience. Therefore, the educational system had to confront itself with new unimagined challenges such as: recruiting teachers without educational formation, conciliating part-time and full-time teachers, equating teaching approaches to reach the new (reluctant) underprivileged students, finding strategies to promote a positive learning environment among members of different races and ethnicities, confronting mass culture with high culture, confronting academic parameters with individual academic responses or dealing with violence within the four classroom walls. In this respect, the films chosen, will address these matters and will direct the debate towards other no less thought-provoking issues concerning the private and state educational goals, the importance of higher education and the power of parental guidance or lack of it.

I do not forget that film-makers know that cinema is a business of entertainment and that education professionals are unlikely to alter their practices as a consequence of a fiction film (Barker 2009), nevertheless screen culture is part of our everyday life, therefore when a school film is released audiences and critics usually comment on the verisimilitude of the *reel* lessons. If writers, directors and producers have had a personal school experience, it is only natural that when cinema portrays school stories a large number of people are prone to watch them, precisely for the simple reason that all of us share the experience of school attendance, whether good or bad, which affords us an opinion, an empirical non-scientific qualitative opinion about school life and the teachers’ tasks. However, it is my belief that many films do

not capture the flavour of institutional school life, whereas others do give us some sense of what is experienced by professionals, particularly those which focus on violence and indiscipline in schools such as *Stand and Deliver* (1988) and *Dangerous Minds* (1995). In schools where violence is illegally “institutionalized”, the first concern isn’t teaching but *taming the students* so that afterwards they can be taught and hopefully become academically successful students. That is why these films inaugurate the concept I address to as *edu-taming*, which consists of enforcing rules and discipline first, to create the appropriate atmosphere to deliver the curriculum and have committed students later.

A vast number of school films are teacher-centred and offer a society analysis, in the words of Barker (2009) the teacher-centred film is often a ‘social problem’ movie, identifying the learners not just as people with learning needs, difficulties and objectives but as people whose problems come from and feed back into much wider social arenas. Films like *Stand and Deliver* or *Dangerous Minds* clearly depict this view. On the other hand, films like *Dead Poets Society* and *The Emperor’s Club* deal with privileged social groups who attend private schools, who share the values of the dominant culture (usually shown to be over-controlling), and who have social influence and money on their sides, being teenagers and students, their school years are also the stage for personal dramas, but in these films the stars are the male inspirational teachers, the ones who have to find their own way against opposition when teaching demanding high achievers.

If we think in terms of verisimilitude, most directors of school films make some attempt to portray a credible school atmosphere through the fictional characters and the schools they work at. Nevertheless, in most of them authenticity is undermined by over-stressing certain pedagogic stereotypes, such as the inspirational teacher, the teacher-savior, the grateful student, the rebellious student or the doting pupil, and underplaying what is normative or undramatic. Therefore, I believe that there is a void in the school film subgenre.

The script about the normative institutional daily routine where real teachers and students go on with their personal dramas and their professional duties, the script of the undramatic classroom routine, of behavioural (un)predictability, of curricular choices and of assessment constraints has yet to be and in all probability never will be made.

Our experience often shows us that forces outside the classroom are much mightier than those within it (Barker 2009) therefore private schools and well-run state schools both have problems which range from economic, social and political constraints to simple everyday human dramas. On the school stage, we find the social microcosm of a certain community, a sample which taken as a focus group can provide us rich insight into the eternal duality of the social winners and losers. They all attend school, but they do not all finish their studies, they do not all make the same effort to have good marks, and certainly not all are culturally stimulated at home. From another perspective, there are many whose innate gifts and learning rhythms do not match the average teacher's expectations, despite being culturally stimulated, well-behaved and organized students. Famous writer and educator Daniel Pennac wrote a passionate document about his own slow learning problems in his book *School Blues* and Alan Bennett, via the character Rudge from *The History Boys*, also addressed the paradoxical feeling of the slow learner, the person who is in Daniel Pennac's word a "dunce", someone who aims to please and have good marks but fails to do so within the formal academic parameters of knowledge. This leads us to some open questions: are there slow learners or learners with different learning styles, whose aptitudes are not directed to the established formal curricula but to other useful and skilled social areas? Are secondary school and high schools the answer for those whose intellectual investment is not recognized academically? Should the school system re-evaluate the curricula and offer diverse paths for diverse learning styles instead of underestimating those who do not match the standards? And how to do so without affecting hardworking full time teachers who believe that education is

for all and strive to teach as many students as they can in order to contribute to relevant personal growth as well as to collective co-existence? These are real problems today.

Historically, as Susan Ellsmore points out for the British scene, after the second world war, the development of the Welfare State meant that schooling was extended on a wider basis; as a result there was an expansion of the state system, which gave birth to the full-blown primary and secondary school sectors. (Ellsmore, 2005:2) Over the decades of the 60's, 70's and 80's mass education was fostered not only in Great Britain but also throughout Europe. Being a social, political and cultural phenomena, mass education brought along with it a series of new pedagogic challenges and questions. As Desforges (1995) observed large number of children in overcrowded classrooms did not create a productive learning environment; instead it favoured indiscipline and boredom. In addition, many of the school age students did not want to be in school, they had no interest in the curriculum and they saw no relevance in learning it. Hence, it was not surprising that students finding themselves in boring and meaningless situations would do anything to disrupt lessons (Ellsmore,2005:3), discouraging many of the idealistic teachers who had rushed to enter the profession.

The expansion of mass schooling originated a diverse school constituency and along with it new educational paradoxes, to name a few: education for all, but not where all value formal education ; school for all, but not all can aspire to higher education, there are *vacancies* limiting access to higher education ; higher qualifications, well-paid jobs (nowadays this is no longer so true); state schools for all but private schools for the elites whose money can buy them a prestigious place in the culturally, economically and many times politically dominant spheres of social power. Such paradoxes play a part in the school film's hidden curricula, despite being recessive in plots anxious not to seem too radical.

One should then reflect on the role of public education, which allows and compels all citizens to have a formal education, but which recognizes that many individuals shall not be prepared for highly skilled “thinking” jobs (or even if they are, there will not be top places for everybody). Besides, the access to higher education and culture *per se* does not guarantee successful financial and intellectual recognition as experience shows us; many unsuccessful students turn out to be good business people who earn more money and prestige than those who have invested time and money in the intellectual pursuit of cultural and technical knowledge. What is the role of school and education then? What must we rethink as teachers, students, parents, what must we rethink as sensible educators? What are the legitimate expectations one should build around school, what are its individual and social benefits? These are some 21st century challenges.

It is my belief that films are important screen culture documents which allow an analysis of the past and its mistakes, a vision of the present and a debate about the future in regard to the educational field. As Andrew (1988) has stressed, in an age of visual culture, it can be asserted that films are important for image-based research as historical documents, providing valuable insight and information for analysis and debate. Likewise Hargreaves (2000) also states that school films preserve the visual and narrative information which is not produced out of an educational culture, hence providing a detached view about the teaching profession and the school as a system.

As a foreword, I would like to point out that films like *To Sir, with Love*, *Stand and Deliver* and *Dangerous Minds* present the student-teacher classroom arena in its starkest survivalist terms, in which the teacher has to prove himself/herself stronger, wiser and more cunning to restore class discipline in order to be able to teach the socially underprivileged students, who do not acknowledge formal school education as anything worthy of their attention or as something that will be of any use to them in the future. Another key feature of

these films is the teacher-hero who finds ways of motivating these underprivileged students and of transforming most of these potential social misfits into hardworking academically successful students. Conversely, the film *One Eight Seven* is one of the few which presents the teacher as the real victim in the classroom arena (in fact *One Eight Seven* was based on a true story), its crude representation of a violent *gangsta* society is enough to stir one's consciousness about the real hardships nowadays state school teachers to a greater or lesser extent have to face. *One Eight Seven* is an ugly film. We do not see miraculous pedagogic strategies work, we don't see teachers touching poor teenage students' hearts and minds. On the contrary, it presents us with the scientifically well prepared teacher as a social victim who can find no support in the regular school system, having to depend on substitutions in *ghetto* schools to survive while attempting to carry out his professional duties. Despite his scientific and pedagogic skills, Mr. Garfield (*One Eight Seven*), magnificently played by Samuel L. Jackson, will end up being killed by students he had tried to teach. In other words, *One Eight Seven* is a dark vision of America's hopeless poor divided multi-ethnic and over-violent society, raised on rap, fast food and TV culture. *One Eight Seven* stands out amongst school films not for its miraculous teaching recipes, but for its fictional fatalism, where the earnest effort of a common human being, the teacher's, is beaten down by injustice, casual violence and institutional impotence.

But teaching is not always or even often a "dead end", as we have already seen. Charisma, inspiration and emotion are ingredients that can save the day on the classroom stage. Who wouldn't like to attend Mr. Keating's inspirational literature classes in *Dead Poets Society*? Who wouldn't find Maths relevant and stimulating if in the classes of Mr. Escalante in *Stand and Deliver*? Who wouldn't feel tempted to investigate Dylan's poetry in Miss LouAnne's classes in *Dangerous Minds*? And who wouldn't like to learn history with a history master such as William Hundert in *The Emperor's Club*? One should consider that for

those who have pleasure in intellectual challenges, the teachers and the subjects just alluded to would always reverberate and get their messages across; conversely in classes constituted by mixed ability and differently motivated students, getting the message across is a difficult task closer to the teachers' everyday routine. Ideally, a teacher aims to reach all the students, however can a teacher satisfy the multiple learning styles of the students? Is it possible to follow the rhythms of all the students in the classroom? And what role do students play in school? Can students expect to learn without the effort of studying? Is the students' success directly connected with the teacher's methodological approaches or do intrinsic factors make the difference?

As we can see there are many narratives and many roles on the classroom stage but having the main role, as teachers most often do, is neither simple nor linear. Despite this, in most of the films above mentioned, tribute is paid to the teacher, for he/she is able to motivate the students to be more cultured and academically successful, enhancing both individual and collective social betterment and this is usually achieved only at the cost of great personal self-sacrifice.

Another idea that can be extracted from the set of films just mentioned is that the teacher's personal life is in "stand by", so all of his/her attention and time is directed to the students' needs, the students' problems and to ways of preparing more interesting classes so that the students pay attention and study. Besides the extra thinking on how to capture the students' attention, some of these teachers even involve themselves directly in their students' personal lives. From this point of view, one can see that these films address and occasionally blur the question of boundaries. Should teachers involve themselves so directly in the students' personal lives? Teachers Escalante (*Stand and Deliver*), LouAnne (*Dangerous Minds*) and Garfield (*One Eight Seven*) try hard to establish bonds with their students, and to obviate pupils dropping out or making little investment in their studies. For that purpose they

go to their students' homes, talk directly to the families and experience the economic, cultural and social deprivations parents and children endure. But is it wise and is it professional to mix the students' personal lives with the teachers' duties? Conversely, is it possible to teach students without considering their personal economic, cultural and social circumstances?

Many school films allude to this reality, envisaging school-family communication as a cornerstone of the students' individual and academic growth.

When watching *Stand and Deliver*, *Dangerous Minds* and *One Eight Seven*, one gets the impression that the school institution does little to promote communication between the school and the family. In fact, in some cases, it leaves it all in the teachers' hands, hoping for him/her to be able to tame the disruptive students and teach them the syllabus at the same time. In addition, the teachers of the above mentioned films all share the condition of being inexperienced teachers (with little or no access to mentoring, peer advice or support). Despite their recent professionalization, none of them has taken up teaching as a career, for different and varied reasons, but they all have embraced teaching as a mission and have tried to transform their idealism into pragmatic ways of teaching the unruly classes to which they were assigned. In reality, the idea of mission has been greatly associated with the choice of teaching as a job over the years.

Finally, I would like to stress that the choice of school films to discuss the educational and pedagogic panorama over the last decades is supported by McCulloch & Richardson (2000) who believe that the utilization of visual sources to study individuals, institutions and cultures, constitutes important and valid historical documentation to explore the educational lessons of the past, analyze the lessons of the present and question the future. These are the goals of the next five chapters.

CHAPTER ONE

Education and the cycle of violence

“ It is our belief that cinema is not just an art, a culture, but a means to knowledge, i.e., not just a technique for disseminating facts but one capable of opening thought onto new horizons. “

Jean Mitry

Horizons are of the utmost importance as far as school and education are concerned. In 1967, director James Clavell adapted the book *To Sir, with Love* written by E.R. Braithwaite into a screenplay and directed a film after the same title, portraying the schooldays of a teacher named Mark Thackeray, brilliantly performed by Sidney Poitier, and a group of disruptive suburban and underprivileged East End of London students.

In reality, this film approaches numerous school issues which range not only the teacher's point of view but also that of the students'. Racism, ethnicity, citizenship and social stratification are also vectors of the story that takes place in North Quay in the East End of London, in other words, in one of the most economically underprivileged geographic areas of that city.

The fictional teacher Mark Thackeray may be easily described as someone inexperienced, academically successful, hardworking and in need of a first job. In fact, Thackeray embraces teaching because he hasn't had a chance to get work in his chosen area, as an engineer. Teaching is therefore a part-time job that is firstly sought for the purpose of survival, for the pay check. As we may observe in the film's first scene Thackeray, a low income teacher, travels by bus and quietly listens to the spicy conversation of the market women who surround him. This bus trip sets the social tone of the film, vividly depicted by the market women's vulgar language and manners. Thackeray's bus experience can easily be connected with the one he has when meeting his rebellious students, whose manners and language mirror their upbringing in the East London terraces. As spectators of the classroom

show, we may notice that the first teaching attempts fail because the students are uninterested in the curriculum, have reading and comprehension problems and lack the basic skills of self-control and self-discipline necessary to invest intellectually in a task.

After diagnosing the pupils main learning obstacles, Thackeray, who is working in a progressive school as far as students empowerment is concerned, decides to approach them as adults-to-be. He abandons the official school curriculum, something which in non-fictional schools is not possible, and implements a new teaching methodology based on a dramatic proposal. He asks his students to act like grown - ups so that they can be duly respected. This fictional teacher-student stage leads to a new classroom scenario, one which invites the audience to accompany the subsequent behavioural change.

Thackeray's teaching victories increase throughout the film, since he manages to get his students interested not only in domestic science such as cooking, but also in learning via school trips, museum visits and classroom reading. Nevertheless, there is an antagonist in the plot, the student Denham, played by Christian Roberts. Denham is the archetype of the rebel student, who defies the teacher's authority because he is an adult, because he is there to teach and because he is going to put an end to the students' disruptive behavior. Denham is, in fact, the student who resorts to racist remarks, contributing to the film's alignment with black segregation. Conversely, the fact that Thackeray has experienced himself the taste of poverty and discrimination, favours a better understanding of the pupils' ignorance and of their edgy behaviour, for personal experience is used to give lessons of life as well as of good citizenship. Amidst these we may find the teaching of a curriculum which is practical and meaningful to these students.

Despite being a “ sentimental view of school kids who just need the right kind of

guidance to set them on the path to contend adulthood”³, as Graeme Clark observed in his *To Sir, with Love* review, this film remains up-to-date and insightful. As far as the social setting is concerned, one can easily compare it with the suburban areas of most European countries inhabited by the low income and less cultured working class population. Despite the geographical and chronological distance, portrayed via the mannerisms of the sixties, a common disruptive behavioral pattern can be established when comparing *To Sir, with Love* (1967) with films such as *Dangerous Minds* (1995), *Stand and Deliver* (1988) , *One Eight Seven* (1997) or *Entre les Murs* (2008).

In reality, the social corpus portrayed in films like *187* and *Dangerous Minds* is even more savage and unruly than the one Clavell portrayed. Even so, there is a pattern – children from socially, economically and culturally underprivileged areas have difficulty in responding positively to institutional schooling, for they lack the motivation for intellectual challenges, they don’t value the official curriculum, they take pleasure in disrupting the class dynamics as well as, *in extremis* , in the film *187*, students push their teacher to the limits in the classroom arena and eventually succeed in transforming the place of edutainment in a war zone.

When establishing connections among the cited films, one must stress the curriculum relevance, the struggle for classroom power, the teaching methodologies for conflict solving and the teaching content as well as the teacher-student boundaries within and outside the classroom / school limits.

As stated before, Thackeray’s classroom management strategies start with the implementation of dramatic roles in the classroom, Thackeray asks his students to role-play the parts of adults and, being part of an educational institution that leaves it all in the teacher’s hands, he wisely puts aside the official curriculum which visibly wouldn’t match the

³ Graeme Clark on *To Sir, with Love*, at: <http://www.thespinningimage.co.uk/cultfilms/displaycultfilm.asp?reviewed>, 1997. Consulted on 12th October, 2011.

students' first needs and resorts to a pragmatic set of life and citizenship lessons, allowing his students to choose the topic and therefore empowering them and making them responsible for their own learning content. This bold approach slowly wins the students over, but demands resilience and creativity on the part of the teacher. The first lessons one learns from the movie *To Sir, with Love* are the importance of authority and teacher control in the classroom. The second is that to teach the school curriculum one must be in the presence of good citizens who know the boundaries of social co-existence in a common space (the classroom) and who are able to respect other people's ideas, opinions and the teacher's leadership. Besides that, a meaningful curriculum is a good way of capturing the students' attention and of using the lesson time in a fruitful clever way. The same classroom control worries are portrayed in films such as *Dangerous Minds*, *Stand and Deliver* and *One Eight Seven*.

In *Dangerous Minds* female teacher LouAnne Johnson, also inexperienced and untrained, takes up the job of teaching to make ends meet. The appeal of the pay check soon clashes with the unpleasant reality of having to teach English to a group of disruptive multi-racial *ghetto* students. The first lessons LouAnne Johnson has to endure can be compared to a classroom arena where leadership is disputed between students and teacher. LouAnne tries to control the students and tries hard to implement the lesson plan which has been carefully and pedagogically prepared. However, LouAnne soon realizes that unless she is able to establish order and grab the pupils' attention, she won't be able to teach the school curriculum or to carry out any lesson plan.

LouAnne's classroom management strategies are highly fanciful and even *dangerous* from my point of view. The most filmic are related to the teachers' change of look from classical to sophisticated jeans and leather jacket. The fact that she uses her marine curriculum and karate skills is, at the very least, controversial as far as controlling a *gangsta* class is concerned. The use of force may be a source of disruption, instead of problems

resolution, therefore the Hollywood stardom way in relation to classroom indiscipline would likely lead to gratuitous violence.

Other dangerous lessons to bear in mind from this film, as far as classroom management and control are concerned, are the use of candies, sweets and paid dinners as learning rewards. In the context of the film these may seem friendly tokens which contribute to the creation of positive bonds between the teacher and the students (and may be welcome from time to time, in a context of equality), but experience shows us that these are fallacious and may disturb the clarity of assessment as well as give way to erroneous interpretations by the students who are not rewarded, by staff members and the students' parents. LouAnne's teaching methodology continues to be dubious since she deliberately assesses all students with an A before knowing them, which is wrong, *dangerous* and totally unrealistic. LouAnne, like Thackeray, also seems to be left alone solving classroom disciplinary problems, but unlike Thackeray, she deliberately defies the school curriculum and enforces her own curricular changes as well as assessment criteria. In this respect the title of the film should be reduced to the singular form and should be applied to LouAnne's teaching strategy – a *dangerous mind*.

Carrying out face-to-face communication at students' homes is once again double-edged. If, on the one hand, it is meant to show the teacher's concern with the students' problems and to establish communication between the school and the family, on the other, it is a display of institutional negligence and of personal lack of awareness, as far as teacher-student institutional boundaries are concerned. In this respect the *reel* clearly overlooks the real consequences of such actions, which as the film itself portrays, do not always receive a good parental response. In any case, these fictional representations of school teaching and of classroom management are important to show us the importance of questioning the school world.

Nevertheless, there are also positive aspects to LouAnne's teaching approaches. After getting her students attention, via the aforementioned *dangerous* methodologies, she finally conveys the message that learning and growing culturally is the ultimate goal of attending state school.

LouAnne, like Thackeray in *To Sir, with Love*, explores the potential for the lyrical in all of us. The first uses pop music lyrics and poetry to wake up the numb sensibility of her teenage students. The second invests in school trips to museums as means of making them rich culturally and of waking their emotional and rational selves up.

Inspired by the classical fairy tale happy ending, *To Sir, with Love* and *Dangerous Minds* are presented as a tribute to the teachers' creativity, resilience and charisma. Both Thackeray and LouAnne are victorious teachers who deal with disciplinary problems successfully, who capture the multi-ethnic and multi-racial students' attention and who inspire students to learn and become better citizens. Both Thackeray and LouAnne's students understand the value of classes and start believing that school education can broaden horizons and be a source of a better life as well as of a better future.

Stand and Deliver also belongs to the category of inspirational school films which idolize the teacher and romanticize the students. Moved by some of the clichés of *To Sir, with Love* and of *Dangerous Minds*, in this film the audience watches a math teacher who has given up a well paid job in order to come to public schools and help kids learn math. Therefore, Escalante is an example of the socially *engagé* teacher who came to the public school not for the pay cheque but with the hope of performing community service by teaching multi-ethnic, mostly Hispanic, school kids. Escalante's Hispanic roots are also pedagogically explored on the classroom stage, providing a common language and cultural background which enhance the teacher- student relationship. Along with Thackeray and LouAnne, Escalante resorts to edu-taming techniques, such as irony, to enforce discipline and respect in

the classroom. Escalante teases his reluctant students telling them that “tough guys don’t do math, tough guys deep-fry chicken for a living”. Moreover, he presents his students with innovative teaching methodologies, compelling his “burro students” or “dunces” to think and to understand math in the context of real life. Escalante is also aggressively presented as a true-life teacher. This claim to verisimilitude to some extent accounts for the success of the film not only among film critics, but above all for audiences.

If, on the one hand, Jamie Escalante is a committed hardworking teacher able to make his students study math beyond their expectations, on the other hand, as far as his personal life is concerned, once again the stereotype of an over-devoted teacher who relegates his family to second place so that he can be a twenty-four hour teacher is played up in the screenplay. Another aspect that parallels the previous films is the lack of institutional boundaries as far teacher and parental contact are concerned. In *Stand and Deliver*, like in *Dangerous Minds* and *To Sir, with Love* the teacher takes the students’ affairs into their own hands and look for the kids’ parents, establishing a dialogue about their school life with them.

Once more the Anglophone films fail to represent any institutional link between family and school, choosing to eulogise the goodness and kindness of the school teacher who puts him/herself in a paradoxically (un)professional situation. In fact, both in *Stand and Deliver* and in *Dangerous Minds*, one of the contacts established with the parents results in verbal confrontation and in a bitter and unfortunate outcome to the teacher’s intervention. From these fictional scenes, another lesson of what to avoid can be taken – real teachers belong to institutions with institutional representatives, therefore it is dangerous and unprofessional to bypass these authority figures, at the cost of endangering one’s life and losing institutional trust. A wider lesson can be extracted from these films: they over-sentimentalize the pedagogic teacher-student relationship and ultimately they are

educationally misleading and dishonest if seen and consumed without a critical eye and a thoughtful mind.

As far as ethnicity/race is concerned, the films before mentioned all deal with this sensitive social sphere. One cannot ignore that each film director has focused his lenses on powerful artistic conflicts such as the teacher –student power struggle within the classroom or the multi-ethnic tensions that collide in the confined classroom area.

In reality, the school public has become more multicultural and diverse, due to worldwide emigration. From the sixties up to nowadays one can understand that the economic and social convulsions throughout the world gave way to migration and immigration. In fact, today's European landscape has changed due to political bonds such as the European Community, to cite one, and a broader concept of freedom. These ties have allowed individuals to circulate and use their skills in different countries and cities of the world. In the 60's, Clavell subtly approached the issue of multi-racial co-existence not only in the classroom, but also in relation to the teacher-student relationship. During one break time⁴ Thackeray has an informal pedagogic conversation with his students that ends in a minor incident with the teacher's hand bloodied. The students' humorous racist remarks, instead of sincere human concern, bring to light the racist unconscious which has not been abolished and which we may observe again in school films produced decades later, such as *One Eight Seven*.

Both in *One Eight Seven* as in *To Sir, with Love* the slur "nigger lover" is implicit in the rude comments of the students. In *One Eight Seven*, in relation to the friendship between a white woman teacher and the black teacher Garfield, in *To Sir, with Love*, when student Denham suggests that Miss Hare has a crush on the black teacher Thackeray. Inter-racial relationships as well as male - female relations in general are also a part of the educational

⁴ *To Sir, with Love*, 50'

films, for it is impossible to leave out the Freudian “libido” that is part of the human existence and, therefore, it is subtly inserted in the plot of these films, presenting extra ideological material for thought.

Along with the racist remarks are the external psychological pressures teachers have to put up with in their schooldays due to the students’ vicious nicknames or rumors. These directly affect their privacy, their professionalism and their interaction in the social rooms of school. In other words, one can suggest they are part of the grotesque in the teachers’ profession, together with the students’ indiscipline and lack of respect for the teacher as a skilled professional.

Stand and Deliver (1988) is a school film which stresses the importance of respecting diverse ethnic backgrounds. In this film teacher Escalante reminds his students that there is a social assumption regarding Hispanics as not very intelligent people, therefore they can’t learn math. Being himself Hispanic, Escalante deconstructs the prejudice by using it as reverse psychology with his students, i.e., he confronts his Hispanic *barrio* students with the ethnic stereotype which socially represents them and provokes them in order to wake up their intellectual potential for learning. Jamie Escalante’s methodologies will be fruitful and inspiring. In fact, the film ends with the statistics of the students results, something which confers verisimilitude to the film itself and shows that students have been improving their results year over year, thanks to hard work and Escalante’s pragmatic teaching methodologies.

Escalante not only makes good use of his cultural Hispanic background inside the theatrical classroom, but also resorts to cultural curiosities when teaching math, as the

example of the origins of the number zero⁵,implying the importance of relevant cultural knowledge when teaching any subject to an audience of pupils.

Stand and Deliver is a positive inspiring light film, the kind of film that reaches the spectators' expectations and provides hope for teaching in public overpopulated, poorly equipped schools. Its role on the stage of education may be stressing the popular aphorism – where there is a will, there is a way, accounting for its popularity in diverse countries and cultures. From another perspective, Escalante can be compared to Pennac's teacher savior, the one who allows their students to become reborn in the presence of committed passionate teaching:

In their presence – in their subjects – I gave birth to myself: a me who was a mathematician, a me who was an historian, a me who was a philosopher, a me who, in the space of an hour, forgot myself a bit, tucked myself between brackets, got rid of the me who, before encountering these teachers, had stopped me from feeling I was really there. (...) Their lessons were feats of communication, of course, but of knowledge mastered to the point where it almost passed for spontaneous creation. Their ease transformed each class into an event to be remembered .(Pennac, 2010:225)

In contrast to this idyllic view of the hero teacher who inspires gratitude in the students of the *gangsta paradise*⁶, one film stands out – *One Eight Seven* (1997). *One Eight Seven* was written by a teacher, Scott Yagemann, who “initially“ made his living by substitute (supply) teaching in Los Angeles in some of the toughest schools. When one student threatened to kill him, he thought it was just another bullying tactic, until he found out that the student had stabbed a colleague the previous term. (...) [there] he saw his chance to write a film based on his experiences of teaching “ (Steen, *The Guide*, 7-13, 1998)⁷.

Yagemann's teaching experiences, portrayed and fictionally hyperbolized by Kevin Reynolds, constitute one of the most frightening fictional chapters of the teaching arena. In *One Eight Seven* the spectator is invited to undergo a journey of madness and absurdity

⁵ Jamie Escalante tells his students that their ancestors the Mayas discovered the value of zero.

⁶ Dangerous Minds soundtrack lyrics.

⁷ Cited by Ellsmore, p.79

through the progressive destruction of a teacher, as well as of a human being. *One Eight Seven* shockingly goes beyond the limits of reason but it definitely shakes the viewers' minds as far as the process of teaching and learning in underprivileged *guettos* is concerned. In opposition to *Dangerous Minds*, the viewers will open their eyes to uncontrollable violence in the school space, gratuitously brought by social underprivileged students who lack not only individual and social values but also self-restraint.

Moreover they bring their home anxieties and frustrations into the classroom, compromising, from the start, any idyllic assumption of teaching the school curriculum and of obtaining gratitude for doing that job with quality and excellence. *One Eight Seven* is one of the darkest and thought-provoking school films ever directed. As Janet Maslin observed in her review: “ ‘187’ depicts a school system in the throes of total anarchy and a scared, angry teacher fighting devastating long odds.”⁸ *One Eight Seven* presents, once more, a black teacher, working as substitute and not as a full time teacher in a tough school, this time in Brooklyn, USA. Like Mark Thackeray in *To Sir, with Love*, Garfield comes to school in a low income means of transport – the bicycle, but unlike Thackeray his personal experience won't benefit him in the classroom, as he will be in the presence of physically and psychologically violent adolescents who have come to terms with marginality and have lost the judgmental boundaries between right and wrong. Garfield's classroom may be seen as a modern Dante's view of hell, more precisely as a circle of violence which will question justice and revenge. Pedagogy and humanism prove to be of very little value to Garfield and his school colleagues, for fear and weapons are the common language among these *barrio* students.

From the outset to the end of the film, the audience enters into a spectacle of intense violence and despair. As James Berardinelli commented:

⁸ Janet Maslin on *187*, *Ideals Running Scared in High School*, at: <http://movies.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9A2E5D6103AF93>, consulted on 12th November, 2011.

Public education today isn't what it used to be. Many urban schools have metal detectors, and the threat of violence, either by student on student or by student on teacher, hangs in the air. Newspaper headlines shout out stories of children gunned down in bathrooms and stabbed in halls or classrooms. Discipline has become a joke; students and teachers alike are more concerned with surviving the school day than following the curriculum. So it's not much of a stretch to accept that the environment presented in *187* is closer to reality than to some nightmarish fantasy.⁹

The first outburst of violence occurs right at the beginning of the film, when Garfield is stabbed by a parole student who had flunked his subject. After this traumatic experience, Garfield returns to the teaching profession in another no less problematic multicultural school – John Quincy Adams School, in the suburbs of Los Angeles. The choice of slow motion shots to depict Garfield's arrival to his new school assignment in an old graffiti walled school, facing the *gangsta students* is cinematically explored by director Kevin Reynolds. When inside the crowded dark classroom bungalow, the shots are blurred in order to emphasize Garfield's fear of facing violent students. Verbal violence as well as psychological violence set the tone for Garfield's new teaching experience. His first interaction with the Hispanic students is far more violent than any of the interactions portrayed in the before mentioned films *Dangerous Minds* and *Stand and Deliver*. Slang language, a defying attitude as well as the external marks of a *gang* way of life all contribute to the highly fearful classroom atmosphere. Garfield's inspirational speech about the possibility of all students becoming scientists rapidly faces the resistance of an unmotivated class whose main aim is killing time and plotting against the next *gang* victims. Garfield's resilience is daily tested up to the point of breakdown. The California penal code for murder *One Eight Seven*, which gives the title to the film, is repeatedly scratched on Garfield's car and home, warning him and the audience as well that death is his way, there is no escape. Garfield, like LouAnne Johnson and Jamie Escalante, tries the family approach to solve disciplinary school problems, however this proximity is poorly thought of by the slum students who take it as an intrusion rather than real teacher's concern.

⁹ James Berardinelli on *187*, at: <http://www.reelviews.net/movies/o/187.html>, consulted on 12th November 2011.

From a sociological point of view, *One Eight Seven* is a vivid document of a poor valueless decadent society inhabited by rebels *with* and *without a cause*, who inhabit the world's communities and, therefore, require political and educational actions, as observed by EW's grade:

In saintly-educator movies like *Blackboard Jungle* or *Stand and Deliver*, the surly, black-leather-jacketed, weapon-wielding delinquents were bad apples lurking at the bottom of the barrel. They were the exception, not the rule. But the killers, rapists, drug dealers, and assorted other junior sociopaths who glare their way through **187** represent a new evolutionary strain of secondary-school hoodlum. Unlike the classroom rebels of the cinema of the past, they aren't just breaking the rules society has laid out for them; they're writing their own rules. Their criminality, with its echoes in pop culture and fashion (violent thrillers, gangsta rap, prison-tattoo chic), has made them, in effect, an alternate society.¹⁰

In reality, pedagogy and dialogue prove to be ineffective as teaching tools throughout the film. Garfield tries hard to engage the students in his lessons using several pedagogic materials and using an assertive disciplinary methodology. However such a well thought way of conveying the curriculum is undermined by the violent gang power disputes. Besides the classroom arena, *One Eight Seven* suggests that teachers do feel "God's Lonely [Men]" every now and then, for there is little protection for them either inside or outside schools. As the film evolves, the tensions lived and suffered inside the school walls soon trespass that boundary and haunt the personal lives of the teachers. Garfield and Ellen are the protagonists of this juxtaposition of school life and real life, having to gradually change their lifestyles (as Ellen did by moving into her mother's house) or giving in to the same violent gang pattern of (in)justice, i.e., taking justice into their own hands (such as the case of Garfield who ends up killing one of his students, a gang leader).

This film, unlike *Dangerous Minds* or *Stand and Deliver*, does not suggest a volte-face on the behavior of the gang students, on the contrary, it fully explores the crescendo of psychological and physical violence that culminates in the " Russian – roulette war-torture

¹⁰ EW's grade, *Details With: Samuel L. Jackson*, at: <http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,288965,00.html>, consulted on 12th November 2012.

sequence from *Deer Hunter*” (EW’s grade, *ibid*). Absurdity and madness punctuate the final scenes of the film implying that reel learned violence in non-judgmental environments may lead to real violence and the loss of reason. The climatic violent scene at the end of the film along with Garfield’s murder of a student, who continuously harassed him and his colleague Ellen, both pose the question of the frail line between a fair and an unfair death. The traumatic atmosphere the audience experiences by accompanying Garfield’s descent to hell, invites them to question if it is wrong to take justice into your own hands when justice, law and authorities are unable to protect hardworking righteous citizens in their daily duties. Once again, from a sociological point of view, the impact of the pop *reel* culture on adolescents whose hobbies are watching *telly*, *graffiting* and learning the violent codes of gang survival is revealed by the multi-ethnic gang members’ attitudes.

One Eight Seven goes beyond this circle of violence and expands its critical eye on the tutoring of underprivileged students. Garfield’s well intentioned offer of help to a “chicana” student, Rita (a poor comparison to *Educating Rita*), is first interpreted as a trade of sex for study help. The misunderstanding, which puts the teacher’s reputation at stake, is overcome by relocating the tutoring sessions to the library, an open common space, nevertheless the strangeness of a black teacher teaching a young gypsy student is subtly approached by the lenses of Reynolds, which focus the perplexity of the staff towards this generous interaction. From this scene it is possible to allude to the boundaries of the teacher-student relationship, an issue that is recurrent in many of the school films being analyzed.

Another subtle approach concerns the interracial relationship, portrayed by Garfield and Ellen, which contributes to the plot’s development mainly, but that also illustrates the students’ frivolous remarks about the teachers’ private lives, in other words, psychological bullying that comes from inhuman adolescent criticism. As we can see in the film, Ellen is confronted in the middle of her informatics class with a vicious e-mail from one of her

students saying: “Teacher *f... niggers*” (187,1:14:59). This incident vividly suggests that one of the many real hardships teaching young students involves is the gratuitous gossip to destroy one’s reputation and mental stability.

Despite referring to an American fictional reality, *One Eight Seven* dark school visions of edutainment and edu-taming transcend its borders and constitute a good document of and for school analysis. As *movie buzzers* observed:

It definitely helps you give more respect for the teaching profession and as you watch the movie makes you wonder how many teachers feel the same way as Garfield. This movie is great for students but even better for fellow teachers to watch because it was made for you, the ones who instruct and inspire the youth of today.¹¹

As mentioned before, *One Eight Seven* does not present miraculous recipes for teaching *gangsta* students like *Dangerous Minds* or *Stand and Deliver*. Conversely, its apocalyptical view of the school system and of society itself invites the audience to re-examine and revalue the teaching profession in the light of today’s social asymmetries, and their direct implications in the teachers’ classrooms. The final scene of Ellen giving up teaching by throwing her diploma into the garbage bin symbolizes the victory of nihilism over idealism. A job reduced to an absurdity of nothingness, in which the idea of social transformation via education is, if not defeated, seriously compromised. From those who graduate, as we see at the end of the film, few will be part of the category of role models, or world opinion leaders, on the contrary they portray the flesh and blood imperfect and unfinished high school students whose social integration will rely on survival techniques, for whom the school time will merely mean a pastime in the past (but not an agreeable one). The film leaves us an open question which I pose with simplicity: under these warlike conditions who dares to be a teacher?

¹¹ At: <http://moviebuzzers.com/2009/11/01/one-eight-seven-1997-review/>, consulted on 14th November 2012.

School violence in school films was also explored in the counter-culture British film *If* (1968), directed by Lindsay Anderson. *If* (1968), filmed thirty years before, is a complex surreal and ironic school film criticizing not only the limits of power in a boarding school but also the paradoxes between the individual self and the repressive social rules of co-existence inside the school institution.

The film begins with a thought provoking- proverb: “Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with thy getting / get understanding.”¹², inviting the audience from the beginning to undertake an *engagé* approach towards the movie they are about to see. Bill Weber suggested: “[this film is] a Brecht-influenced epic metaphor for the authoritarian cudgels of empire and class”¹³. As Weber suggests, *If* is Anderson’s left-wing cry against the status quo and the perpetuation of the oppressive social class divisions, leaving little room for individual awareness and freedom of choice. Having attended a public school himself¹⁴, the one where he shot this film, Anderson cathartically presents the Academy as the anti - archetype of Plato’s Academy of thought. As Humberto Pereira da Silva points out in his review ¹⁵ Anderson’s academy is transmitting the traditional conservative values of order and discipline via authoritarian hierarchic power and military force.

If addresses the everlasting problematic between social order and the right to individual self-expression. By portraying the repressive atmosphere of the Academy, where students are expected to understand reality within the schools’ frame of mind, reproducing it, and where experience is nothing more than the school’s austere daily routine. In other words, Lindsay’s conservative Academy perpetuates social and individual inequality but fails to

¹² *If*, 00:13.

¹³ Bill Weber, *If*..., at: http://www.stylusmagazine.com/articles/movie_review/if.htm, consulted on 15th December 2011.

¹⁴ The film *If* was filmed in the school attended by Lindsay Anderson, Cheltenham College.

¹⁵ “If...” (Lindsay Anderson), at: <http://filmespolvo.com.br/site/artigos/convidado/707> , consulted on 15th December 2011.

understand that each individual has a mind of their own and the idea of a righteous or wrongful society. In reality, the film counterpoints right and left wing political views not only by presenting the fallacy of the first but also by presenting the left wing violent individual response against the repression of individual freedom of thought and behavior. Two extremes haunt the film – the idea that order should be enforced by fear and might and the counter-idea that violence generates violence not peace and order. Inequality and repression feed Anderson's counter-culture rebellious spirit, greatly inspired by the sixties' world view. From my point of view, *If* doesn't present either innovative policies nor new educational views, it is a surrealistic polemic against the British status-quo experienced by Lindsay himself, as well as by boys from five or six preceding generations (going back to the reforms of Dr Thomas Arnold in the mid nineteenth-century), and a cinematic counter-cultural treasure that really deserves its place in the film history universe.

As cinematic material, *If* is one of those films which shows deep concern with details; in reality the director, Lindsay Anderson, graphically stirs the audience by presenting the conditional clause *If* in red, followed not by the common ellipsis but by four iconic *dots* that leave room for the spectators' imagination. The title also challenges the audience culturally, for this title may allude to Rudyard Kipling's poem of the same name.

The film, set in the late sixties, takes us inside a male English public school. From the first scene until the last, the audience witnesses symbolic moments that range from the first encounter between newcomers and older students, who address the youngest calling them "scum", to the last climatic school civil war scene. Anderson's ironic critical eye questions the rules and rulers of an educational institution that prepares future citizens. As David Sanjek mentions in his review: "*If*... (1968) [is] a poetic and provocative evocation of the tyranny

embodied by the English school system.”¹⁶ The slur order, discipline and tradition sets the tone of the school environment from the beginning.

If we establish a parallel with today’s schools, order and discipline are topics that still stand out. Nevertheless, Lindsay’s portrayal of order explores the excesses of the authoritative figures named whips and their abusive ways of managing power. The school system the film addresses is based on a hierarchy which empowers some of the older students to enforce the rules and regulations of the institution. This non-democratic empowerment leads to constant tension between the whips, seen as tyrants, and the most rebellious students. *If* explores not only the topic of corporal punishment¹⁷ but also Pink Floyd’s later “dark sarcasm in the classroom”¹⁸. The chaplain’s corporal punishment in the math classes as well as the whips’ display of corporal violence, when punishing Mick and his rebellious mates, are educational extremes that have been gradually vanquished from school pedagogies. Nonetheless, a new vacuum has emerged, from an atmosphere of repression such as the one we perceive in *If* (1968) we have crossed to another of disciplinary impotence such as the one we encounter hyperbolically depicted in the film *One Eight Seven* (1997). In this respect one might argue that pedagogic and psychological research has not taught us yet how to erase human violence from human interaction. Hence, school films, such as the ones being discussed, clearly imply that violence has a life of its own, transcending the laws of reason and ending up in warlike arenas and bloodshed.

There is tension between pop culture and high culture. In films such as *Dangerous Minds* or *Stand and Deliver* teenagers’ origins pose a problem from the outset but, as we have discussed before, their cultural input and world view is enlarged via the liberal political

¹⁶ David Sanjek, *Elegist of Empire*, at: <http://www.popmatters.com/pm/review/mainly-about-lindsay-anderson>, consulted on 15th December 2011.

¹⁷ Corporal punishment was abolished in Britain in 1986.

¹⁸ Pink Floyd, *Another Brick in the Wall*, lyrics at: <http://www.pink-floyd-lyrics.com/htm/another-brick-2-wall.html>, consulted on 15th December 2011.

educational solution. The educational liberal view is positive and embraces the ideals of better citizenship as well as of a more intelligent/understanding society via education. In reality, it portrays the idea of a better world through the power of school cultural “enlightenment”. In films such as *One Eight Seven* or *If*, tragedy is the only resolution, suggesting that violence is a strong universal language that does not solve conflicts, in effect it merely contributes to the absurd spectacle of gratuitous destruction of the individual and of the society.

If subtly alludes to the sarcasm of the teachers in the classroom, especially in the scene of the history teacher who delivers the essays joyfully to the students and initiates a monologue about the beginning of World War I, which few students are capable of understanding but who do not dare, unlike nowadays, to open their mouth to pose questions or to engage in parallel conversations while the teacher is speaking. The teacher’s authority is undisputed. From a pedagogic problem solving point of view, sarcasm can be a strategy to use sensibly and evenly. Adolescents are “rebels without a cause” who continuously test the teachers’ limits, therefore having the ability to ignore provocations via ironic and sarcastic remarks may confer authority on the teacher and save his/her school day. From another pedagogic perspective, sarcasm may destroy the communicative atmosphere of a classroom and put an end to the learning process. Its impact is therefore unpredictable.

In what concerns teachers and the classroom dynamics, there is a glimpse of the science, sports and history classes. From these, the ones which most seem to involve the students are the PE lessons and the Headmaster’s lesson on the power of education and of the teachers to shape the future world students will part of. To cite his words:

Britain today is a powerhouse of ideas, experiments, imagination on everything from pop music to pig breeding, from atom power stations to miniskirts and that’s the challenge we’ve got to meet...in College...in whom the muscles of creativeness are flexing...That’s what makes my job worth doing...¹⁹

¹⁹ IF, 25:00.

From another perspective, the viewer can perceive Lindsay's criticism via irony and hypocrisy that lies in the Headmaster's speech, defending the privilege and hegemony of the ruling elite.

Lindsay also addresses and parodies the lack of gender interaction in scenes such as the lunch time, when Mrs. Kemp is given overwhelming attention by the male teen students at the table and when Mick and one of his friends flee from school for one day and one of the most surreal scenes of the film takes place – Mick meets a girl at the café and they entangle a flirtatious animal-like dance which merges the absurd and the carnal. The scene allows multiple readings and is itself an open-ended and eye opening scene. The mute male/female encounter suggests discomfort and lack of education as far as gender interaction and communication are concerned. Anderson ironically stresses the animal seduction that relies on gazes, moans and physical strength. In other words, an ironic display of sexual repression. The scene which follows it is a metaphor of teen freedom, joining the three adolescents on a motorcycle ride on a road to nowhere, the scene ends just as it begins, surrealistically.

Throughout the film, suggestions of homosexual attraction are displayed in order to stress not only that there are different sexual orientations but also that the discovery of one's sexual identity involves interaction with other human beings of the same and of the opposite sex. Bearing in mind the pedagogic dialogues school films allow, these scenes call the attention of the educational system to the issue of mixed gender schools and, more importantly, to the issue of sex education in schools. In fact, this being the sixties, famous for their cries of sexual and social liberation, such human dimensions remain controversial and sensitive, for they embody a set of dichotomies – the boundaries between the private and the public, personal choices and social morals, family education and the educational social concerns of the national educational system. The idea that "*sex goes to school*" causes

difficulties for parents, teachers and students alike. The World Health Organization has been approaching this reality worldwide by point out the following evidence:

Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, ethical, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.²⁰

Despite pedagogic evolution and of the health programs schools have embraced all over the world, talking about sex in a school context still remains a delicate matter at which some immature students still laugh, of which some parents are suspicious and which teachers cautiously and pedagogically have to deal with. Lindsay Anderson's *If....* (1968) surrealistically touches the issue of sexuality in the male public secondary school, such approach clearly stresses the sensitiveness of this matter. In this respect, as well as in the way the film was woven, Anderson's irony transcends a narrow simple minded view of the system and its repressive atmosphere. In other words, *If* is a film of visions filmed by a visionary. The vision of political repression enforced by authoritarian hierarchies, of educational oppression inflicted by peer empowerment and of a sadistic pleasure that accompanies the exercise of power and physical punishment.

The film's narrative also pathetically presents a tragic-comic war training commanded by the chaplain of this educational institution and ends in the climatic civil war scene that ironically gives life to Mick's motto *One man can change the world with the bullet in the right place*. Amidst absurdity, it will be *The Girl* who will shoot the bullet that kills the Headmaster, whom the film suggests is the symbol of the repressive school system Anderson disagrees with. *If* deeply questions the notion of the *wisdom* and *understanding* that a school

²⁰ World Health Organization, *Gender and Human Rights*, at: http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/gender_rights/sexual_health/en/, consulted on 3rd January 2012.

system can impose on an individual, suggesting how unpredictable it is. In other words, the repressive school system Anderson hyperbolized in the final war scene subverts the school's notions of *wisdom* and *understanding*, since terrorism was born out of that system. Furthermore, the students' rebellion is paradoxically a violent cry for freedom, a cry for a different school and a cry for a different education. In other words, *If* is Anderson's way of saying that for this school system "we're just another brick in the wall" commanded by human "big brothers" whose language is psychological violence and sadistic power. As Roger Waters would point out with such a system "we don't need no education".

Water's criticism of state education visibly stressed that grammar mistakes were far less important than the circumscription of an individual's freedom of speech and freedom of thought. Therefore, it sort of flashes back the repressive atmosphere depicted by Lindsay Anderson and his deconstruction of the school system. It appears that both the privileged and the underprivileged are the imagined victims of malign "thought control".

Finally, doing justice to the title, a related reference to the concept of manhood yearned for in the film crosses Anderson's mind, the one that praises human wisdom over violent understanding, in the words of Rudyard Kipling:

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with triumph and disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;

If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breath a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on";

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings — nor lose the common touch;
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man my son!²¹

The poem addresses not only the adult ethical struggles but also the hardships one must endure to be a “man”, i.e., a self-reliant citizen and a righteous human being. Becoming such “a man” involves both the family circle and the outer social sphere, of which school remains as one of the most long-lasting.

Kipling's poem has been read by right wing followers as a hymn to self-reliance, inviting the individual to become self-made and self-sufficient. Nevertheless when associating the poem *If* to the film one can, on the one hand, observe the irony of the conditional clause - *If there was a revolution to change the status quo*, what then? On the other hand, one can

²¹ Rudyard Kipling, *If*, at: <http://www.drmary.com/ifferisms/kipling.shtml>, consulted on 11 January, 2012.

detach it from its political misappropriation and re-read it – if the students could hear Kipling’s words and learn to fight for a better existence via hard work, well-regulated emotions and principled compromise? *If only* we could change school and use it as a means towards a peaceful world revolution of mentalities? *If* we could teach students that the most important thing is being a responsible tolerant right-minded citizen and by being that, wisdom and intellectual evolution would stand a better chance? *If* they could be taught to respect diversity and keep the *common touch*, then being a *man* would definitely be acknowledging difference and finding room for all people in the world. What if education could be the engine of a better and fairer society? One that Anderson surely deeply longed for. *IF....*

Chapter Two

Reel Visions on Private and Public Education

“A film’s ‘curriculum’ is not simply inherent in the images, sounds, and words emerging from the screen...it is instead constructed through the manner in which these elements are configured by the film’s writers, directors, and producers (and performers) to create the final...filmic product (...) Moreover, the impact of a film does not occur in a cultural vacuum; it depends on the context in which the film appears. It is therefore essential to consider the social and political environment during the period of a film’s release in order to more accurately interpret its meanings. “

Ronald E. Chennault

School films usually make a point of highlighting the difference between the state and the private sectors. As a matter of fact, each director strives to provide a clear social and institutional ambiance for the school portrayed, whether it is placed in a slum area or in more privileged surroundings. Therefore, “the film product” immediately shows the viewer the *hic et nunc* of the film narrative, not only reinforcing its verisimilitude, but also hinting at the kind of social problem the film will be addressing.

In 1989, Peter Weir directed the genre’s only blockbuster, *Dead Poets Society*, a school film that would entertain and inspire a significant number of viewers, amongst these many school teachers to be, throughout the nineties. The film focuses on a private school at the end of the fifties which proudly guides its students according to the four pillars of success - “tradition, honour, discipline, excellence”. In fact, these are the words of the headmaster’s opening speech, which are intended to be inspiring both to parents and students. Welton’s indoor and outdoor spaces (impeccable buildings, well-equipped classrooms and inviting green spaces) also convey the idea that this school is the perfect place for academic achievement and personal, cultural and intellectual growth. One could argue that Welton is a

metonym for the whole private school system, which is attended by sons and daughters of well-off parents, who were themselves mostly academically interested learners. The *reel* portrait of private schooling continues with the depiction of its teaching staff, its rich curriculum and its extra-curricular activities. In fact, Welton puts a heavy emphasis on studying, doing homework and enrolling in artistic cultural activities. The students are therefore culturally stimulated but the whole environment compels the students to work so that their privileged education may be fruitful for their future social integration. In 2002, despite the plot's other singularities, Universal Pictures presented the same paradigm in the film *The Emperor's Club*, directed by Michael Hoffman. This film relies on the same private school features – good buildings, good working conditions, wealthy motivated students, rich curricula and well prepared teachers. In addition, St. Benedict's motto mirrors Welton's values but mainly stresses the value of knowledge, both for oneself and the community. From the very beginning, the audience is introduced to the principles of shared wisdom (*Non sibi*), which is not only for oneself but also to be used on behalf of others. This private school is also proud of its academic and social achievements, pointing out that many influential social actors have attended it. Therefore, a first reading of those films leads us into a privileged milieu which bears little comparison with the one of the state schools portrayed in films such as *Stand and Deliver* (1988), *Dangerous Minds* (1995) and *One Eight Seven* (1997). It is thus clear that there is a difference between the public of the state schools and the elite public of the private schools. At Welton and St. Benedict teachers' concerns are mostly related to the transmission of knowledge, despite the films' plots allowing an analysis of other important private school realities, whereas at Garfield High School (*Stand and Deliver*), Parkmont High School (*Dangerous Minds*) or Roosevelt Whitney High school (*One Eight Seven*) teachers are not only expected to transmit (necessary minimal) knowledge and skills but also are expected to deal with unmotivated, underprivileged and difficult students. This huge contrast

places the viewers before two distinct realities which determine the delivery of the curriculum, the management of the classroom, the assessment of students and the educational outcomes possible. When comparing the above mentioned institutions, one can see that they cannot have the same results, for the more culturally stimulated students will have better performances despite the innate individual intellectual capacities.

As stated before, *Dead Poets Society* (1989) and *The Emperor's Club* (2002) both convey the school environment of great reputable private schools, nevertheless personal dramas and institutional constraints are exposed by the writers and directors in each case. In relation to the first, the plot of the film follows the conventional structure of the impact of the inspirational charismatic teacher. Robin Williams (Mr. Keating) plays an innovative mature English Literature teacher in a conservative traditionalist academy. Weir aims to put Keating in the spotlight after quickly peeping into the classes of his school colleagues teaching Latin and Trigonometry, stressing the rigidity of classroom rules and the rigour of evaluation criteria. In Keating's classes, rules of behavior and assessment criteria are not questioned or even mentioned; the emphasis is directed towards his teaching methodologies which engage the pupils both emotionally and intellectually. Paradoxically, the film presents Keating as both the hero and the institutional villain, for carrying out a divergent way of teaching, which has at its core the individual awakening to the *dangers of conformity*. Being part of a traditional standardized institution, Keating pays the price for such boldness. As Ellsmore notes: "John Keating believes that poetry is a living thing and this underpins his inspirational approach to his students to pursue individual desires and, by subverting tradition, encourages them to make their lives extraordinary." (Ellsmore, 2005:72)

From a pedagogic viewpoint, Keating offers his students (and the teachers to be) an emotional approach to poetry, considering it an essential part of the human condition

and emphasizing the importance of emotion in adult life, stressed by the fictional character Keating in the following words: *law, business and engineering are all noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life, but it is poetry, beauty, romance and love that people stay alive for.* The film not only stresses Keating's original teaching strategies, that range from standing on the class table to reading poetry while kicking a ball, but also honors poets such as Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Robert Frost, Robert Herrick, Alfred Lord Tennyson, William Shakespeare or Lord Byron using some of their poems in unconventional teaching contexts, and cherishing the idea of poetic societies where language is celebrated like a living organism.

In this respect one may argue that the film beautifully interweaves plot and poetry, creating an engaging comedy of bringing young men to an understanding of their own rich inner lives, stunted by institutional repression and ideas of duty, service and discipline. The film reaches a mass audience by insisting on the charm of being liberated to find yourself by a charismatic teacher. Nevertheless, the misinterpretation of this focusing on the inner life will lead to the climactic scenes of Neil's suicide and Keating's job dismissal. Maxims like "carpe diem" and "O Captain! My Captain!", encouraged by Keating in his first class when addressing the students will ironically be used by the staff, parents and students against Keating and his teaching methodologies at the end of the film (bringing about the end of his teaching career at Welton too). In fact, the film's central question ends up being the risks of instigating free thinking and non-conformity without attending to parental and institutional factors. As well as admiring Keating's inspirational teaching methodologies, *Dead Poets Society* exposes the dangers and the price of customizing the teaching and learning process in an authoritarian era that views teenagers not as pre-adults, but as mere adolescents, unable to think for themselves, whose parents know what's best for them, despite their will or sense of vocation.

Dead Poets Society (1989) also sheds light on institutional disciplinary procedures, showing that in private institutions most parents and students view the teacher not as an educational partner but as provider of the formal curriculum whose personal views/methodologies, regardless of their quality, can be carefully scrutinized and used against the educator (despite their innocence) if there is an unexpected turn of events. Thus, this filmic narrative endorses an ambivalent cry for individual freedom of thought by choosing a set of literary pieces that incite individual choice, but simultaneously exposing the danger that this freedom can represent in practice to institutions overvaluing social virtues like tradition, honor, discipline and excellence.

The final scene is vivid evidence of the dangers of non-conformity in an institution, since Keating is blamed for Neil's suicide due to the seeds of freethinking explored in his classes when reinterpreting classic poetry. The film raises delicate issues such as - should the teacher transmit curricular content without seeking critical thinking or personal views? What do parents expect from the private and state institutions as far as education is concerned? How do headmasters, staff and students view innovation in the classroom? Last but not the least, are institutions and society in general able to tolerate and value the ones who follow "the road less travelled"?

Embracing other pertinent questions, *The Emperor's Club* (2002) presents us with the story of another inspirational teacher, this time a Classics Professor who devoted his life to the teaching of *Western Civilization – the Greeks and the Romans*. The film starts by placing us before the retired Professor who calls himself "simply a teacher" and uses the flashback technique to narrate two stories within the story, i. e., the story of Professor Hunter and his teaching career and a brief story of his career concerning a clever but unruly student.

Considering the private/state dichotomy , *The Emperor's Club* (2002) also reflects the life of a private academy which is attended by the most influential members of the community, those who are offered high positions in the job market and who later hold power and decision making, in other words it is an academy for wealthy high achievers who know they are part of the highest rank of the hierarchy and *great things* are expected from them. Once again their school day is devoted to studying and intellectual stimulation, presenting study groups and peer learning as a means of progressing. Their goals are set by their parents who make sure their children value the money they are spending on their education and so expect good academic results from them. When contrasting the private institutions depicted in *Dead Poets Society* and *The Emperor's Club* with the schools of *Stand and Deliver*(1988), *Dangerous Minds* (1989) and *One Eight Seven* (1997) we easily perceive that social diversity is a reality. If we created an imaginary scenario where Professor Hundert was assigned to teach in one of the state schools fictionally presented in these films, one could predict his lack of success, for the audience would belong to the fringes of society, would have diverse learning expectations, diverse cultures and, certainly, the amount of time devoted to studying and memorizing knowledge would be totally different (if considered relevant) . Such a social gap directly affects educational institutions, their teachers and the outcomes of the students, making it impossible for governments to compare private or even state schools according to simple arithmetic parameters, since the background of the population greatly determines educational success.

Curiously, in films such as *Dead Poets Society* and *The Emperor's Club*, the presence of books and the type writer, an important technological artifact (we were not yet in the era of the world wide web) reflect an atmosphere of intellectual work, whereas in the state schools portrayed in the other films the TV set, the graffiti and the *Walkman* are the icons of teenage culture. Once again the social gap is stressed, this time via cultural iconography. It is

generally the case that narratives of educational privilege set themselves back in time, while those of under-privilege attempt to be aggressively contemporary. Rather like the film costume drama, general audiences enjoy worlds bathed in nostalgia, even worlds they have not, nor probably ever would have, fitted into.

None of these films challenges the notion of intelligence, conversely they focus on social, economic and cultural evidence to present high achievers and underprivileged students. Moreover, the effort to teach in a state school when compared to a private school (bearing in mind the hyperbolic fictional framework of all the schools portrayed) is different. Yet, one has to stress the fictional success of Hundert's authoritarian approach, Keating's stagey methodologies, Escalante's down-to-earth "street-smart" teaching techniques and LouAnne's approach via pop literacy. These methods are seen as motivational and appropriate, as it were given validation by their very well-defined social contexts.

The private/state dichotomy places before us a set of social problems, for all institutions aim to educate and further the growth of competent citizens, able to acquire knowledge, produce knowledge and use the knowledge that comes from school education. What are then the priorities of state and private education? Would it be possible to diminish social disparities via education within justice criteria? Should schools be concerned with their rankings or with the formation of future balanced educated human beings? What is the role of institutional education these and the days yet to come?

Focusing on the film *The Emperor's Club* (2002), I would like to stress the episode of the rebellious student, Sedgewick, whose personal and social influence disrupts the perfect classroom environment of Mr. Hundert's classes. From a disciplinary point of view Mr. Hundert followed the usual procedures which involve talking with the student who challenges and disrupts the classes, understanding his problems, promoting opportunities for academic

development and self-esteem and even running risks to teach him the importance of character, honestly acquired knowledge and hard work. Also as a part of behavioral management, Mr. Hundert meets the students' father and gets in touch with a powerful American senator who receives him in his office and offers him a gun as a welcome token. Having set the tone of the conversation and of the power relations, Senator Bell soon destroys Hundert's idealism as far as molding the boys' character is concerned. The Senator clearly tells him that as a teacher his job is transmitting knowledge, leaving the forming of pupils' characters to parents and their idiosyncrasies. Despite the ideological clash with the Senator in relation to the role of "Western Civilization" and of the teacher himself, Hundert doesn't give in and tries to pursue his idealistic goals to teach the students that "a man's character is his fate". The most representative example of this concept is winning the memory contest "Julius Caesar" by studying hard and being the best. The contest is by no means an unimportant part of the excellence criteria of St. Benedict's, for being part of the top three is *per se* an academic achievement and winning the contest is an honour. From another perspective, although the contest is set on the basis of fair opportunities, fair judgment and fair victory, it also stirs the temptation to win by cheating and gives the audience the opportunity of equating honest learning.

The film is coherent in its message – character is a man's fate – and the contest is won by the most well-prepared student, thanks to Mr. Hundert's sense of justice and honesty. Besides, the contest also allows further reflection, on the importance of acquiring encyclopedic knowledge. Considering the time span of the school year and this institution's students goals, memorizing facts and figures may be a priority and a pleasure, however one should consider the role of encyclopedic knowledge from an up-to-date standpoint. In reality, what is the balance between knowledge known by heart and the knowledge that can be acquired by research? Don't humans learn what is more relevant to them mostly? What is the

role of school education – to promote competition or to favour personal growth and social inclusion?

At the core of the *Emperor's Club* (2002) is the commitment of a teacher who has lived for his academic career and who, despite his right minded conduct, sees himself denied the position of headmaster when a vacancy occurs. At that precise moment the film shows Hundert (and the audience) that a man's character is not enough to be appointed to the headship of an institution, as the position is given to one of his former students, a teaching colleague too, with the ability to raise funds.

The film also emphasizes the importance of character, showing Sedgewick as a grown-up trying to take advantage of Hundert's honorable reputation to promote his future Senatorial career. The battle of good character is always won by William Hundert (the teacher) who receives the deserved homage from his grateful right minded students in the end of the film. The film finishes with a happy ending stressing the importance of character and conveys a final school/life lesson, voiced by the narrator at the end of the film: *the worth of a [teacher's] life is not determined by one single success or one single failure, therefore it is the teacher's duty to always hope that with learning a boy's character might be changed.*

Inevitably, school education contributes to the character of the individuals as pupils. This contribution is questioned at the fictional *Marcia Blaine* girls'school in the film *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, which is based on the novel written by Muriel Spark. The director Ronald Neame addressed this issue in the film, which greatly owes its success to the overwhelming dramatic tone of the characters, mainly Miss Brodie's (an Oscar winning performance by Maggie Smith), and the refined irony of the plot and the characters. Neame is successful in his recreation of the school: classrooms, staff members, headmistress, students and wardrobe (in particular the girls' uniform). On the other hand the plot's provocative and

hyperbolic tone seems highly unrealistic. The script was inspired by a semi-autobiographical novel and it revolves around an unconventional female teacher who consciously subverts the school curriculum in order to provide “her girls” a glimpse of what she believes to be exposure to the “real world”. The audience is drawn to Miss Brodie’s *dangerous mind* right from the outset when offered an extended view of her first lesson. From a pedagogic point of view, first classes aim to impress and set working rules and in this respect Brodie’s attitude is impeccable, for she manages to hypnotize the so called “girls at an impressionable age” and direct their attention towards her self-realizing teaching approach, since Brodie’s teaching methodologies are not teacher-centred, but self-centred, dramatic and abusive.

The film’s first scenes clearly focus on the lively Jean Brodie as an independent minded school teacher who, despite working at a conservative school whose creed is a proverb that praises the virtuous pious passive women, views her classes, her students and her curriculum as the “crème de la crème “ of this school. Thus, from the outset the film invites the viewers to question her character and her idiosyncrasies, besides exploring Brodie’s educational misconceptions that will ultimately be responsible for the death of one of her students and the disillusionment of another. As stressed before, Brodie’s first class is very revealing because it shows her total undisputed authority, her crude selection of the “Brodie set” and her subversion of the curriculum by deciding to talk about her favourite painters, pretending to be teaching the syllabus and by sharing intimate stories with adolescent girls whose emotions are easily manipulated. Hence, the film economically presents the audience with the fallacies of Brodie’s teaching and positions them to judge her future behavior. As Katz well observes:

In early grades, a teacher’s role may more closely resemble that of a surrogate parent in that she is concerned directly with her students’ moral , social, and psychological development as well as their cognitive growth. (...) teachers are [therefore] entrusted by school officials to act in the best interests of their students. (...) [and] are in especially privileged positions either to promote or harm a student’s well-being; they can do so both intentionally and

unintentionally. In this regard, teachers make hundreds of decisions and judgments every day and every week. Even teachers acting with the best intentions are capable of making bad judgments that can be harmful to one's students. Thus it seems critical for teachers to understand the nature of their influence on their students;²²

Influence is then a key word in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969), the film clearly invites a critical eye on the teacher's approaches – the creation of an elite group, the molding of the girls of this group by imposing on them her passions for painting and music as well as her historical world views - fascistic sympathies that were the fruit of her shallow interpretations from her European travels- without due understanding of their range and power “at an impressive age”. In fact, the film juxtaposes irony and drama while pursuing the case study of the teacher Jean Brodie, which may be observed in the tone of her voice - always high pitched, her assertive remarks epitomized by the aphorism “I’m in my Prime” and her eccentric behavior by taking her “gels” to her lover’s estate over the weekends.

From a pedagogic point of view, it is possible to demystify the inspirational and charismatic in Jean Brodie, since subverting the school curriculum and the principles of the institution that employs and trusts her (despite the need for questioning them) is highly dangerous. Imposing one's views on the students, exposing them to personal intimacy and envisaging that “a common moral code” would not apply to her special girls is neither inspirational nor charismatic. In other words, as a school film, *Jean Brodie* definitely stands for the teacher one shouldn't be, one who is narcissistic, one who seeks to see herself reproduced in an elite group of students, one who perverts the school's educational proposals without being up front with the board of governors and who uses her power to manipulate and endanger her most loyal girls. Besides her feminine boldness in what concerns her personal lifestyle choices in relation to companionship, sex, clothes, art and duties, the narrative

²² Katz, Michael S. *Trust, Trustworthiness, Narcissism and Moral Blindness: An Examination of The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. At: <http://www.philosophy-of-education.org/pdfs/Saturday/Katz.pdf> , consulted on 15th July 2012.

strongly point out the vicious effects of Miss Brodie on her students by having one of her most intelligent girls betray her at the end of the film, i.e., by having a student teaching her the lesson of her life – no one is interested in a teacher who manipulates and endangers youngsters' lives. That's "ridiculous", as her ex-follower Sandy sarcastically tells her in the last climatic scene of the film. Jesus and Judas archetypes abound in the school film subgenre, because of the implied intimacy of the mentoring role.

When contrasting the charisma and power of screen teachers like Brodie, Keating and Hundert, one should highlight the important differences. Brodie's teaching methodologies did not in fact promote freethinking, nor ethical awareness; by contrast Keating and Hundert presented solid literary curricular stimulation that moved the students and allowed them personal development as well as ethical reasoning. Another conclusion may be drawn. Brodie's lessons relied on the oppressive interpolation of her personality and life experience at every point so they had a constricting effect in influencing character, whereas Keating and Hundert's lessons were not egotistical, they were outward-looking and aimed to honour the feats of those who had transcended the boundaries of their *hic et nunc*. From a Kantian perspective Keating and Hundert's students were being prepared to make free, rational decisions in their own interests, whereas Brodie's either escaped her visions or became trapped in the Brodie's "egotistical sublime", influenced very much by a shallow reading of Nietzsche i.e., reproducing and mimicking her excessively romantic, misinformed and unworldly insights.

In light of such examples, one has to ask just exactly what are the limits of the teacher's duty to mould and influence their charges? Whether directly or indirectly all school films address the topic of character formation. This is especially the case when they single out charismatic teachers who have the power to influence the students' behavior

decisively. In 2003, Mike Newell directed *Mona Lisa Smile* maintaining the tradition of the school films that single out the charismatic and inspirational teacher and the small group of individuals on whom he/she will work his/her magic. *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003) is set at Wellesley Girls' College in 1953. Following the presentation pattern of most school films, the audience is quickly introduced to the teacher that is going to be in the spotlight, this time the progressive Arts teacher Katherine Watson, nicknamed "Mona Lisa", who has just got her dream job at New England's top college. The novelty of this film lies in the portrayal of young American women of the fifties and the contemporary view that education and marriage do not match, as David Haviland pointed out in his film review: "Can women have it all?"²³

Once again we are beholding a teacher who aims "to make a difference" in a very conservative milieu and who will see her personal idiosyncrasies challenged by the status quo too. From the outset the charismatic teacher is both praised and diminished by the voice off / the omniscient narrator of the film who presents her as a very intelligent teacher who "made up in brains what she lacked in pedigree". This presentation is apparently challenged by high achievers in the Art class who show the Professor in the first class that they know the syllabus by heart and that her presence in the classroom is dispensable. From a pedagogic point of view, the lesson to be learned is that top students expect novelty and intellectual challenges, strategies that Watson rapidly deploys in order to conquer the class. Otherwise they would have taken pleasure in putting the teacher down and and she would be seen to have lost her authority.

Mona Lisa Smile (2003) is a superficial film that rehashes most of the inspirational

²³ Haviland, David. 2004. At: <http://www.dailyinfo.co.uk/reviews/film/MLS.htm>, consulted on 20th July, 2012.

clichés seen in the films previously analyzed, once more the teacher wants “to make a difference” in the students’ lives or in the institutional dynamics, once more the curriculum is challenged and taken into one’s hands in order to be improved and serve the students’ best interests and once more the personal and professional merge, this time to provide life lessons about the diverse values embraced by conservative and liberal women in the fifties. As David Haviland well observed: “The film is superficially similar to *Dead Poets Society*, but where that film was passionate about poetry, *Mona Lisa Smile* simply uses art as metaphor for the girls’ awakening.” In reality, the film seeks to portray the ethical dilemmas women had to face in the fifties – choosing a career or raising a family, being sexually experienced or virginally awaiting marriage, being a housewife or a (vulgar) career woman. In this respect the film interestingly uses pop art to depict the feminine stereotypes of the epoch by showing illustrative adverts of women’s duties – cooking, cleaning and ironing with a *mona lisa smile* on their faces.

Interwoven in the plot, as stated before, is the action of the female educator who addresses (pre)adult female students urging them to think for themselves instead of fitting into the expected social roles. As we can observe, clichés of thinking for yourself permeate the school films’ plots not by chance, but most likely because one of the inevitabilities of education is stimulating opinions, visions and personal value-systems. When it comes to higher education, as in the case of Wellesley College, the students are no longer under age, though they may not be mature enough to make the challenging life-choices posed to them or to assume the responsibilities that are attached to these choices. Hence, the film rightly shows that a Professor’s role in the context of higher education is of a different nature from that of the primary and secondary school levels. On the one hand, an articulated view of the students’ past benefits the present pedagogic work, as the film implies by showing Professor Watson going through the records of the students. In what concerns the film at stake, the epoch

clearly dictates the “sense and sensibility” of these women who have already conquered the right to attend higher education but who, in general, continue naïve and inclined to embrace traditional social role. Despite being a higher education teacher Katherine Watson, whose personal lifestyle does not match the social patterns of the majority of her students, finds herself punished for challenging them to think for themselves, as Ellsmore notices:

Inevitably, she pays the price for her unorthodox approach both inside and outside the classroom. At the end of the academic year (...) her return to the school is made conditional on her only teaching the approved syllabus, submitting her lesson plans for approval, providing no student counseling, and maintaining professional relationships within the faculty. (Ellsmore, 2005:83)

Thus, recurrently a teacher who intends to make a difference, by subverting or adapting the syllabus, challenging conservative and outmoded institutional principles, ends up being worshiped by his/her students but goes unappreciated by the institution.

A few lessons may be learned from the set of films presented in this chapter, despite the diversity of decades they depict: privileged schools and colleges are demanding educational institutions, where well-prepared teachers work, which well-off students attend, these generally cling to a conservative set of values and do not welcome curriculum flexibility or the encouragement of non-conformity. Similarly, they distrust the inspirational non-standardized teacher whose innovative methodologies or personal idiosyncrasies may put the institutional image at risk. If observed from the point of view of the private and state binary, all privileged schools portray the pursuit of academic excellence, intellectual growth and place character development at the core of values that the institution seeks to inculcate in the students. However, from an institutional point of view, all these schools leave a lot to be desired. They are old-fashioned and rigid and generally show no understanding of what it is to be young, either as a novice teacher or an adolescent learner. Typically, the actor playing the Headmaster in *Dead Poets*, Norman Lloyd, made his name playing shift and psychotic villains in Hitchcock thrillers of the 1940s and 1950s. A few questions can be posed after

carefully watching these films: do private and state educational institutions aim the same? Do private and state schools have the same public? Should there be a division between private and state schools in relation to the educational system? Does education aim to create a fairer society? Is it necessary to overemphasize excellence? Should schools inculcate values or enhance assertive thinking? Should the teacher be denied his/her own teaching style and the student his/her freedom to produce novelty? When may “the road less traveled” be a symbol of diversity/creativity, instead of rebellious non-conformism, suggesting a positive alternative to the *status quo*? Mustn’t education contribute to a better and inclusive world, respecting (not annihilating) our diversity via our common human heritage? Shouldn’t education prepare us to make assertive responsible choices? As Robert Frost poetically wrote: *two roads diverged in a wood, and I / I took the one less traveled by / And that has made all the difference.*²⁴

²⁴ Frost, Robert. *The Road not Taken*. At: <http://www.bartleby.com/119/1.html>, consulted on 30th July, 2012.

Chapter Three

Divergent Teaching and Learning Styles

“The whole approach of education is measured, based upon the idea that life is long and has its stages. One must work now, often on the things that lack personal relevance, to the benefit in the future. One must gamble that one’s teacher does in fact know something about the occluded utility of what is being learned. Education is grounded in deferred gratification and in the idea that the mature and experienced see both further and wider than the young.”

Anthony David Barker

One of the most recurrent critiques addressed to school films is their lack of depth and of serious educational debate. As Anthony David Barker observed in his essay *Teaching and the Classroom in Popular Film Culture* - film-makers know that cinema is in the business of entertainment and that education professionals are unlikely to alter their practice due to a fiction film they have seen. Despite Barker’s wise criticism, I would argue that there are meaningful lessons that can be learnt from the school film sub-genre, such as the Hytner and Bennet’s *The History Boys* (2006). In fact, this is one of the films which one might use to oppose the view of uniform shallowness in relation to the educational debate in screen culture, by posing deep and uncomfortable questions throughout the plot and clearly interrogating the *utility of what is being learned/taught* by the *mature and experienced* teachers and by the students as well.

The History Boys (2006) is a film adaptation of the eponymous play written by Alan Bennett, who also wrote the screenplay in cooperation with the director Nicholas Hytner. The play clearly alludes to Bennett’s autobiographical school experience, as he publically recognizes in the introduction of the book:

Looking back, I see those years from fourteen to sixteen as determining so much that I would later wish away, particularly a sense of being shut out that I have never entirely lost. As it is, Posner is the heir to the character I never quite wrote...Watching Sam Barnett

playing the part, I wince to hear my own voice at sixteen.²⁵

Both the written play and the screenplay of *The History Boys* (2006) are thought-provoking because they question institutional educational constraints, teachers' styles, their methodologies, curricular relevance and students' intellectual and personal views, as well as the ranking of schools and universities. The tone of the film is highly theatrical for it clearly uses irony to smooth over the sensitivity of the issues at stake, not only those related to education but also those related to human dramas that give rise to controversy such as sexual harassment, homosexuality and teenage sexual discovery. The film is set in 1983 in a British state school, where a group of eight sixth-form (senior) boys are preparing themselves for the Oxbridge selection exams and interviews. The film depicts with a great deal of verisimilitude the strenuous endeavor this represents for the school, the headmaster, the teachers and the students themselves, calling the audience's attention to the fact that entering Oxford or Cambridge is a dream few can fulfill, as the following play/film extract illustrates:

Headmaster: ...When did we last have anyone in history at Oxford and Cambridge?

Mrs Lintott: Between centres of higher learning. Last year two at Bristol, one at York. The year before...

Headmaster: ...I am thinking league tables. Open scholarships. Reports to the Governors. I want them to do themselves justice...

(...)

Headmaster: ...I am thinking of the boys. Clever, yes, remarkably so. Well taught, indubitably. But a little... ordinaire? Think charm. Think polish. Think the Renaissance Man.²⁶

From the outset both the play and the film stress the prestige of having students who can attend the old guardians of higher knowledge – Oxford and Cambridge – and the repercussions for the institution that sends them there, as well as the benefits such achievement would confer on the A level boys. Without being an elitist story, the film

²⁵ Bennett, Alan. *The History Boys*. Faber and Faber, Inc. First American Edition, 2006. xxvii

²⁶ Bennet, Alan. Ibid. pp 8-9.

presents us with a group of high-achievers whose levels of literacy and intelligence are far above the average. Nevertheless, the film ironically contrasts their academic achievement with the one that is expected in Oxbridge, concluding that they are still behind and in need of further practice if they want to be ready to match these institutional standards. The film also favors academic debate via the dialogue of the teachers who, despite their professional abilities, didn't attend either of the institutions the boys are applying to, something which doesn't vex them but is, nevertheless, an uncomfortable topic as we may perceive from the amount of time devoted to it and from the youngest teacher's dramatic remark: "not clever enough".

Another educational vector of the play/film are the over-demanding standards of the exams, which require further curricular adjustments. In this respect, the students are taught, out of hours, subjects that include history, general culture, art and sport in order to be prepared to meet Oxbridge criteria. This meticulous preparation culminates in the hiring of a young intelligent history teacher, Irwin, who will teach the youngsters how history has to be approached in order to meet the Oxbridge jury expectations. In fact, these extra classes will expose the educational debate around curricular relevance, teaching methodologies and class content. The film presents a pedagogic triangle of two men and one woman (yet another spinster). Whereas Dorothy Lintott is the "Totty", the one who teaches historical facts and figures and demands their memorization, Irwin, the youngest history teacher, has no nickname. Nevertheless, his are the teaching methodologies which prove to be more efficient, for they are intellectually stimulating and appeal to creative interpretations of factual historical knowledge. Despite, his apparently successful teaching style, the author's ironic view and distrust towards it is voiced by Dorothy at the end of the play when she mentions "I enjoyed your [Irwin's] programmes but they were more journalism than history". The vertex of the pedagogic triangle is occupied by Hector, the general studies teacher, who allows his

students the freedom of acting out in the classroom, creating scenarios where grammar, music and literature may flourish. His methodologies are by far the most controversial for they ironically embrace the platonic maxim that the transmission of knowledge is substantially erotic (an act of love), and an example of that is the fact that students are allowed to externalize their playful sexual fantasies while learning French vocabulary and grammar. From a cinematic or theatrical point of view, the scene is hilarious and almost surreal, nevertheless from a down to earth pedagogic point of view, it is unconventional and the film clearly suggests that it is based on the, many times frail, complicity halo of the student-teacher relationship. Nevertheless, Hector's educational views do stand out because in fact he embraces a view of education for life, instead of education for exams only, which he considers irrelevant and standardized, in the character's words:

Hector: Boys, boys, boys. A levels, Rudge, are credentials, qualifications, the footings of your CV. (...) You will see from the timetable that our esteemed Headmaster has given these periods the euphemistic title – General Studies. (...) I would call these lessons A Waste of Time. Nothing that happens here has anything to do with getting on, but remember, open quotation marks, 'All knowledge is precious whether or not it serves the slightest human use', close quotation marks.²⁷

Hector's romantic view of education is questioned throughout the play, as we may perceive from the following dialogue:

Hector: Oh, ... the appropriate gobbets. Except that they're learned by heart. And that is where they belong and like the other components of the heart not to be defiled by being trotted out to order.

Irwin: So what are they [students] meant to be storing them [poems] up for, these boys? Education isn't something for when they're old and grey and sitting by the fire. It's for now. The exam is next month.

Hector: And what happens after the exam? Life goes on. Gobbets!²⁸

As we may see, the issue of educational relevance is introduced by the characters Hector and Irwin, Hector's speech emphasizing his skepticism towards standardized

²⁷ Bennett, Alan. *The History Boys*. Faber and Faber, Inc. Forelake Ltd. 2004, p.5.

²⁸ Ibid. pp 48-49

assessment and Oxbridge goals. The issue of relevance is also discussed by the students who see themselves confronted by different teaching styles and idiosyncrasies. Many of their dialogues reflect their anxieties about the examinations and the appropriate knowledge to master, since they all aim to do well and get into the most famous British universities, however their teachers' viewpoints, their own inexperience and the sense of disorientation in relation to the relevant information creates an atmosphere of non-sense:

Irwin: What goes on in Mr. Hector's lessons? (...) You learn poetry. Off your own bat?

Posner: Sometimes. He makes you want to, sir. (...) [but] that's not part of the system, sir. Time out. Nobody's business. Useless knowledge.

Hector's educational views and practices are questioned not only by his youngest colleague, Irwin, but also by the school headmaster who believes he is old-fashioned and incapable of falling in with modern ideas about academic targets, as the Headmaster says:

Shall I tell you what is wrong with Hector as a teacher? It isn't that he doesn't produce results. He does. But they are unpredictable and unquantifiable and in the current educational climate that is no use. He may well be doing his job, but there is no method that I know of that enables me to assess the job that he is doing. There is inspiration, certainly, but how do I quantify that? And he has no notion of boundaries.²⁹

The film also alludes to another educational concern, the lack of dialogue between higher education institutions and basic education institutions. The fact that the entrance exams cause so much consternation and insecurity reminds us of the gap between the two. Who then is properly qualified for tertiary education in general and for Oxbridge, in particular?

This play/film clearly raises the debate about the quality of teaching and learning in less famous universities, suggesting that they are also reliable institutions despite not having *the name* and resonance of the Oxbridge pairing, inviting the audience to question the ranking of universities and schools. If we broaden this debate to other countries, surely the ranking of schools and universities also contributes to rivalry and competition, diminishing the

²⁹ Ibid. p. 67

humanistic dimensions of education. What is the deeper social function of league tables if not to widen the divides of hierarchy? The role of higher education, despite the prestigious institution, as a synonym of intellectual achievement and self-development, is underlined throughout the play. What is then the role of higher education nowadays? Who is higher education for? A not-unrelated question is how is it to be paid for, since most of what drives education today is economist at base? How does it envisage life-long learning? Last but not the least, how can higher education contribute to a better and fairer world ?

Bennet/Hytner's *The History Boys* (2006) also encourages viewers to reflect on the undervaluation of the arts, music, literature and history fields, broadly known as the humanities. Via irony and sarcasm the audience is invited consider the frivolity of these subjects, despite the author's love for these subjects. Rudge, the archetype of the less intellectually gifted and least well-disposed towards the humanities (but greatly talented at sports), voices this idea by reducing the definition of history to a short rude metaphor: "history is one fucking thing after the other". The sharpness of the language and the violent content of the metaphor stir up the educational debate around the role of history and how it is taught and understood by educators and their charges. Literature and literary topics such as poetry are also derided and defended by the characters:

Hector: ...Now poetry of a more traditional sort. (...)

Timms: Sir. I don't understand poetry.

Hector: You don't always understand it ? Timms, I never understand it. But learn it now, know it now and you'll understand it whenever.

Timms: I don't see how we can understand it. Most of the stuff poetry's about hasn't happened to us yet.

Hector: But it will, Timms. It will. And then you will have the antidote ready! Grief. Happiness. Even when you're dying.³⁰

³⁰ Ibid. p 30.

(...)

Dakin: The more you read, though, the more you see that literature is actually about losers.
(...) All literature is consolation.³¹

In reality, one could argue that the play and the film satirizes the clichés that are usually associated with the humanities, allowing the audience at the same time to question their views of a fair world. Concerning the debate around history, previously alluded to, the film clearly encourages the audience to think about the importance of learning facts and figures *per se* and to think about their manipulation, which may end up in the distortion of the reality or in a *journalistic* or over-simplified version of the real truth of the facts and figures, in Dakin's words "the *subjonctif* of history" and in Irwin's [I presume Bennett's] cynical style:

If you want to learn about Stalin, study Henry VIII. If you want to learn about Mrs. Thatcher, study Henry VIII. If you want to know about Hollywood, study Henry VIII. The wrong end of the stick is the right one. A question has a front door and a back door. Go in the back, or better still, the side. Flee the crowd. Follow Orwell. Be perverse. And since I mention Orwell, take Stalin. Generally agreed to be a monster, and rightly. So dissident. Find something, anything to say in his defence. History nowadays is not a matter of conviction. It's a performance. It's entertainment. And if it isn't, make it so. (Bennett, 2004:35)

The climax of the debate around teaching and learning history takes place in a peer-taught lesson (Irwin and Hector's) where the Holocaust is discussed. The audience is invited to participate in the lesson and to draw their own conclusions from the debate. Thus, the curricular discussion whether the Holocaust should be an object of study opens the argument for the older emotional teacher, Hector, whose world war views are based not only on literature but also on human concern. Underneath this discussion is the fact that studying for Oxbridge exams involves general knowledge and the ability to embrace unpredictable extra-curricular questions.

Hector: Good gracious. Is that on the syllabus?

³¹ Ibid. p46.

Irwin: It has to be. The syllabus includes the Second World War.

Hector: I suppose it does.

Irwin: Though in any case the scholarship questions aren't limited to a particular curriculum.

Hector: But how can they teach the Holocaust? (...)

Hector: They go on school trips nowadays, don't they? Aushwitz. Dachau. What has always concerned me is where do they eat their sandwiches? Drink their Coke?

Crowther: The visitors' centre. It's like anywhere else.

Hector: Do they take pictures of each other there? Are they smiling? Do they just hold hands? Nothing is appropriate. Just as questions on an examination paper are inappropriate. How can the boys scribble down an answer however well put that doesn't demean it as much as putting it badly.

Irwin: It's a question of tone, surely. Tact.

Hector: Not tact. Decorum.³²

Throughout the film and the play the educational debate also extends to literature and its ancient acknowledgement of homosexuality as an orientation (not a handicap), as we may see in the blunt words of the Headmaster:

Fuck the Renaissance. And fuck literature and Plato and Michelangelo and Oscar Wilde and all the other shrunken violets you people line up. This is a school and it isn't normal.

The debate on the social acceptance of homosexuality runs throughout the play and the film, being constantly discussed by the boys with irony, slang language and even via a plot that suggests that both the male teachers are homosexuals themselves. Hector, in fact, *fondled* the boys with their consent, an attitude that almost cost him his job due to its total inappropriateness. In this respect, the film hyperbolizes the topic of sexuality leading to numerous comic scenes and dialogues. In what concerns the debate around literature, it will be Hector, the controversial General Studies teacher, who will present the most captivating, romantic and meaningful interpretation of its worth:

³² Ibid. pp 71-72

The best moments in reading are when you come across something – a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things – which you had thought special and particular to you. Now here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met, someone even who is long dead. And it is as if a hand has come out and taken yours. (Bennett, 2004:56)

As stated before, *The History Boys* (2006) is a complex and thought-provoking school film of the first decade of the 21st century. It opens an educational debate that expands into various branches, such as the ones that have already mentioned, allowing the audience to think about the state and private education dichotomy as well as the importance of culture and of diverse teachers, teaching methodologies and learning styles.

In relation to the private and state affairs, the keynote is autobiographical, for it fictionally presents Bennett's position against private elite schooling as he admits in the preface to the written play:

I'm old-fashioned enough to believe that private education should long since have been abolished and that Britain has paid too high a price in social inequality for its public schools. At the same time, I can't see that public schools could be abolished (even if there was the will) without an enormous amount of social disruption. The proper way forward would be for state education to reach such a standard that private schools would be undersubscribed... (ibid)

As we may infer from Bennett's words, there is a paradoxical feeling towards public and private schooling; on the one hand state schools promote equality of opportunities and are of free access, but on the other hand the educational and cultural patterns of private schools seem to be impressive and set the tone of quality. This paradoxical view is also present in the voices of the teachers of *The History Boys* and it directs the educational debate towards the diversity of the teaching approaches that range from content-centred in the case of Miss Lintott to culturally eclectic, in case of Hector, or creative-manipulative in the case of Irwin. A detached analysis of the teaching styles by the viewer may then be fruitful, for each has its value in what concerns the endeavor of teaching. From a pedagogic point of view, they all have different goals – Miss Lintott's privileges the outcome, Irwin's the style and Hector's the lessons for a lifetime. Thus, all of them add something valuable to the boys' education,

remaining an open discussion the concept of the best for all of them. After all isn't diversity a richer experience for all? Isn't education a way of awakening students to human heterogeneity, whether cultural, intellectual, emotional or linguistic?

Last but not the least, I would argue that films in general, and school films in particular, such as *The History Boys*, constitute important screen literacy documents. Not only due to their mass appeal, which at first glance could diminish them, but also due to the fact that the way one views them may produce knowledge, educational insight, culture, linguistic development, political awareness, ethical and aesthetic discussion. I would say they are more than mere entertainment and that there are valuable lessons in the *fictional mode* to be considered. As Henry Giroux remarks in his essay *Culture, Class, and Pedagogy in Dead Poets Society*:

Such films [school films] must be analyzed as both public pedagogies and as commodities that both entertain and educate, that offer both enjoyment and put into place modes of desire, subject positions and forms of identification that offer the possibility of critique even as they position us to become complicit with the norms and practices of the dominant society. But most importantly...[these shouldn't] be read simply as sites of conflicting ideologies. On the contrary, rather than reducing such a text to the reified terrain of relevance and the teaching conflicts, it should be posited as site of struggle over how representations mean differently and what the consequences of such differences might be if they are to matter as part of a wider theoretical, ethical, and political discourse...finally, how might students engage this film critically as part of a broader discourse of ethics and politics that promotes a deeper understanding of the historical and cultural locations from which they might speak, act and struggle? (Giroux, 2002:79)

In other words, school films enhance critical literacy and favor multifaceted analysis. Moreover, these are for sure important pedagogic materials not only due to their education-related content, but also due to their humanistic, cultural, social and political insights. As Chennault also points out:

[S]chool films might be exploited pedagogically by incorporating the study of them into the curricula of current and future educators. Of course, films and other audiovisual media have been used in educational institutions for years, as evidenced in part by the abundance of media labs and audiovisual storehouses in elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities. Often, however, films are ... ultimately perceived as supplemental or even inferior to printed texts. (...) these school films can be used productively by present and

future educators ...as a model, through an examination of the implicit messages of the films by considering them within a broader cultural context. (Chennault, 2006:158)

On the verge of a post-postmodern era, education assumes a peripheral position. School films can then be strong allies with which to question curricula, teaching methodologies, students' behavior, institutional goals, individual and social expectations. School films are, at the same time, privileged means of literacy and criticism which should be viewed with a critical mature attitude.

Chapter four

Learning from Reel Lessons on Disability

They took away what should have been my eyes (But I remembered Milton's Paradise)

*They took away what should have been my ears,
(Beethoven came and wiped away my tears)*

They took away what should have been my tongue, (But I had talked to God when I was young).

He would not let them take away my soul – possessing that, I still possess the whole.³³

Helen Keller

In 1962, Arthur Penn directed the film *The Miracle Worker*, adapted for the screen by William Gibson, who years before had presented the story on stage, starring Anne Bancroft, Patty Duke, Victor Jory, Inga Swenson and Andrew Prine. The film aimed not only to portray Helen Keller's life story but also to do justice to her private teacher – Anne Sullivan. Despite not being part of the school film sub-genre, *The Miracle Worker* is a powerful source of reflection about disabilities, about teaching disabled people and about the ability to learn in the face of dire disabilities. Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan's stories have still remain outstanding examples of resilience, perseverance and intelligence.

Although the film was released in 1962, Helen Keller's story takes place in the 19th century, in Tuscumbia, Alabama. Helen became both blind and deaf after having had high fever as a baby, she would overcome her misfortune mainly thanks to the determination and skill of her tutor Annie Sullivan, who was recommended by Dr. Alexander Graham Bell after having examined Helen. In an epoch of grim asylums for all sorts of infirmities, Helen's good fortune began with her family's resilience and acceptance. Helen's parents not only sought solutions to resolve her health and educational problems, but also endured long periods of

³³ At: <http://www.bham.net/keller/story.html>, consulted on 10th August.

misbehavior and tantrums as the film vividly portrays. Being a film about the pain and the horror of having a blighted existence, the story is narrated in black and white segments accompanied by Laurence Rosenthal's music which parallels the drama and its climatic moments of pain, sorrow and happiness. As a film, the *Miracle Worker* (1962) is compelling, thought-provoking and eternal, because it deals with the daily struggle of the disabled, i.e., with the fact that intelligence and the ability to learn are relative concepts that may not be dependent on a person's handicap. In this sense, the film's story, Helen Keller's life story, is revolutionary and instructive.

From the teaching point of view, the film also presents important lessons based on the real teacher Anne Sullivan, who devoted most of her life to Helen's education and who was in fact the pillar of her success. Annie is probably the most inspirational teacher the screen culture has ever eulogized, because she never gave up on her pupil and she never stopped believing Helen was intelligent enough to learn, her own stamina, resilience and teaching techniques being the counterweight to Helen's ill-temperament and her parents' lack of hope. The film also pays homage to Annie's personal drama. In reality Anne had also been blind herself and through a few operations she had regained her sight and started a new life helping other victims of blindness at Perkins Institute. One can see that her autobiographical experience provided her a better understanding of Helen's existential cries. For that reason her *soubriquet* became "The Miracle Worker", the film's title, stressing the teacher's importance in opening the gates to knowledge and learning. Colloquially speaking, Helen's story gives life to the Chinese idiom *the teacher opens the gate, the student has to walk through it*, since it shows the teacher's effort to teach appropriate behavior and language and the learners' effort to understand and learn her teacher's lessons.

As Helen Keller wrote, there were other gifted men victim of disabilities before her,

for example both the poet John Milton and the musician Ludwig Beethoven had to accommodate themselves to a disabled existence and kept on producing artistic masterpieces despite adversities. These examples clearly illustrate the idea that intelligence finds a way to flourish if given the chance to be trained and stimulated. These also convey the idea that creativity finds different channels, as Milton from Beethoven did: one standing out for his writing abilities, the other for his musical artistry. Intelligence and diversity are then two key words as far as the teaching and learning activities are concerned, what brings us back to the film *The Miracle Worker* and its title, Annie's epithet. In fact the film depicts the resilience a teacher needs in order to reach a difficult student whose features do not fall into the category of normality. One of the most dramatic and compelling scenes of the film takes place at dinner time showing Helen's untamed stealing of food from the plate of each member of the family. When attempting to do the same with the newcomer Annie, Helen is stopped and that leads to a severe tantrum, contributing to one of the film's climaxes. The struggle to teach Helen is Herculean and though Annie wins a small battle, the dining room really portrays the image of a war zone where a duel between madness and reason had taken place. The film focuses on Annie's struggle to teach Helen discipline and emphasizes the hardships both teacher and pupil undertook so that Helen could learn sign language and voice the first word. Between the scene at the dining table and the scene of Helen's first utterance, the audience is given a glimpse of the time, the skills and the devotion needed in order to teach, learn and produce knowledge, whether behavioral or intellectual. Despite not being set in a conventional school, the goals and the tasks at stake are for sure pedagogic, for the teacher/pupil relationship also unveils the kind of specialization one needs to have when dealing with disabilities, from acts of extreme disciplining to apparently lighter and informal ones. At the end of the film, Helen finally responds to the teacher's painstaking teaching efforts, giving the audience the expected pleasure of seeing Helen becoming part of the world of verbal

language. The scene is dramatic and enriches the open-ended film, leaving room for the spectator to seek further information about Helen's true story and future achievements. From a pedagogic point of view, the film offers a glimpse of the world of disabilities which in earlier times was associated with abnormality, and of the people who over the centuries have struggled for understanding, inclusion and citizenship.

A film like *The Miracle Worker* allows a pedagogic reflection on disabilities, intelligence, teaching and learning. The film was released in the sixties, more precisely in 1962, and was received by an audience that was questioning the status quo, fighting for freedom and opposing war and racial segregation. As Austin Moody well observed in his online article *The Education for All Handicapped Children Act: A Faltering Step Towards Integration* posted on 3rd May, 2012:

This ambitious act did not come out of nowhere. In fact, it was the result of years of activism and legal action focused on improving the lives of disabled children. The movement towards the inclusion of disabled children and disabled adults is generally picked up momentum after the world war two. The war effort forced more disabled people into the workforce. This engagement with society at large increased the visibility of disabled people and changed public perceptions about their place. As a result, many prominent people began to push for better education for disabled people. However, it was the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 70s that provided the final push that led to public education for the disabled.³⁴

Therefore, the film *The Miracle Worker* was well received by the audience and the critics of the time, since it clearly addressed the rights of the handicapped embraced by the activists. The film still remains a screen document on severe disabilities therefore it should be duly watched. Although, fortunately, from the sixties up to now society has evolved and stories like Helen's are dealt with new insight. In reality, not only in the United States of America but also in Europe social, political and cultural changes would bring about a new mentality and a new way of addressing the rights of the minorities. In relation to the United Kingdom one could stress the importance of the Warnock Report in 1978, calling attention to

³⁴ At: <http://www.csie.org.uk/inclusion/education-disability.shtml>, consulted on 13th August, 2012.

the reality of Special Education Needs and the 1996 Special Educational Needs & Disability Act which reinforced the idea of the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools. Despite this evolution, a century separates Helen's story and strong political measures to protect the handicapped and those with learning disabilities. As Bret Schaffer wrote online:

In 1967 if you were attending a public school, such services didn't exist for kids who would today be identified with learning disabilities. You would have likely suffered through a difficult education experience, struggling to advance to the next grade.³⁵

Twelve years after the turn of the millennium, new economic and cultural realities shape the political options of the world's countries. In respect to disabilities new questions are posed, not only to make sure that the rights legally acquired by the disabled aren't removed, but also to assure that the Special Education field continues to offer solutions to the real problems of those with learning disabilities and handicaps. Nonetheless, even nowadays life stories like Helen's and Annie's continue to be thought-provoking, Helen's story is particularly so, as the film shows, because of its allusion to the concept of intelligence, further investigated by psychologists in the 20th century. Taking into account Stenberg & Grigorenko's words:

A movement came into prominence in the 1950s and early 1960s with the idea that [teaching and learning] styles could provide a bridge between the study of cognition (e.g. how we perceive, how we learn, how we think) and the study of personality. (Stenberg & Grigorenko, 2001:4)

Therefore, in the 70s the concept of style developed and became part of the educational agenda due to its insights in relation to the learning and teaching processes (Stenberg & Grigorenko, 2001), preceding new theories concerning intelligence and cognition such as the emotional intelligence theory, the social intelligence theory and Howard Gardner's multiple intelligence theories. The simple fact that there has been room for

³⁵ At: <http://www.greatschools.org/special-education/legal-rights/803-the-history-and-reauthorization-of-ideas.gs>

questioning cognition and intelligence is tantamount to accepting diversity and their non-standardizing nature. As Helen's life story showed us, the ability to learn transcends a person's limitations if well nurtured and stimulated. In reality, her life story goes beyond the screen story, and though her achievements are real, at first sight they resemble fiction, for Helen was able to learn several languages, wrote several books and was able to graduate. Therefore her *cognitive styles* were fruitfully enhanced and allowed her the possibility to process information despite her handicaps. Nevertheless, these were not spontaneous because Annie's *teaching styles* also matched Helen's needs and contributed to the success of the learning process. In other words:

(...) active learning is most likely when instructional programming and design take into account developmental and individual characteristics that have a direct bearing on how students learn and how well they learn under a specific learning condition. (Renzulli & Dai, 2001:23)

In relation to the lessons screen culture allows us to learn, one for sure is that learning and teaching are effective if relevant to those involved in the act of learning (Renzulli & Dai, 2001). Another is that intelligence is a human potential not directly connected to one's cultural or familiar background, despite the importance of these variables on the development and future intellectual and social achievements of individuals, as Gardner and Sternberg observe:

(...) the narrow view of intelligence and human ability as unitary and being manifested only in psychometric tests [should be abandoned]. They point out that each individual is equipped with a unique set of potentialities and strengths. The issue is not who has the ability and who does not, but how to capitalize on and develop these potentialities and strengths. If we accept this view, it follows that the road to success may be different from individual to individual...[emphasizing] how strengths and weaknesses within the person interact with instructional environments to shape one's stylistic approach to learning tasks. (Ibid:29)

If we bear in mind the *real* lessons of the learning and teaching process in general, and of dealing with disabilities in particular, surely we can question the role of standardization in educational institutions, since the diversity and uniqueness of each individual challenges *per se* the standardized assessment of intelligence and abilities i.e., schools and education

systems have to seek unity, for example via the curriculum content, but have also to allow diversity in respect of teaching and assessing, above all special education individuals who rightly have a personalized curriculum which fits their human features. Furthermore, if we take into account that diversity is the human keynote, standardized assessment may ensure unity and apparently equality of opportunities, but it rarely pursues the diagnosis of the learners' weaknesses and strengths in order to guide them towards the path of self-development and social inclusion. Conversely it is mostly uniform and selective, perpetuating the competitive social system that is more and more aggressive, and clearly generates a divide between intelligent and less intelligent, winners and losers (and most likely, rich and poor). Despite being unimaginable the eradication of all standardization from social institutions such as schools, probably the fairer solution would be to balance the weight of standardization with diversity, giving room to a fairer evaluation which enhances the human potential to express their singularity and creativity, instead of privileging the repetition of previous ideas within the same formulaic constraints. Therefore, if on the one hand the standard may be a means of establishing unity among diversity, on the other hand the fact that each of us is able to utter the same idea in different ways or to come up with new ideas constitutes the richness of human experience, of which school is the major catalyst and cinema one of its best exemplifications. The last lesson Helen's *reel* story has to offer us is exactly that of diversity, emphasizing that disabilities require singular approaches and non-standard treatments; what is curious is that this is also true for all human beings, i.e., each is unique and flourishes within a non-standardized environment, the challenge for governments, schools and other human organized institutions is then finding the most suitable standards for human co-existence and equity and at the same time embracing human diversity and uniqueness. If such a balance begins at an early age, most likely the future generations will become more accepting, more inclusive, less competitive and in two words - more humane. That is at least what the cultural

fields such as the arts, music, literature, theatre and cinema (to mention just a few) have been doing over the centuries. It's not too late to learn from them about the singularity of humankind.

Twenty years after *The Miracle Worker*, director Randa Haines made the film *Children of a Lesser God* (1986) based on Mark Medoff's Tony Award winning play. The film portrays the drama of an inspirational speech teacher, played by William Hurt, his deaf girlfriend (the really hearing impaired Marlee Matlin) and the routine of a small deaf students' school run by a pragmatic headmaster who tells the newly arrived teacher not to have high hopes in relation to these students' future, bearing in mind that his mission should be pragmatic helping them learn as much as they could within their limitations. Despite following the usual clichés of the inspirational teacher, the film values the teacher's strategies to reach his deaf students, which favour rock music, lip reading and syllable repetition. Although the film starts by focusing on the daily routine of James's classes, a second narrative becomes more important than the first already mentioned. In fact the second narrative, James and Sarah's romantic relationship, becomes the center of the plot. It is important to stress that Sarah was a former clever-minded deaf student who refused to learn to speak. James meets Sarah as the janitor of the school and becomes interested in teaching her how to speak so that she can find a better job and have a better life, however James soon finds out that getting through to Sarah is very difficult and it will be sex and affection that eventually bridges their communication difficulties. The director's lenses take us into Sarah and James's daily routine exposing the divide between the hearing world and deaf world. The spectator is given a glimpse of Sarah's impaired childhood and adolescence via the couple's dialogues, translated for the hearing world by James. This way the audience discovers the frustration and the anger of this deaf girl who has been segregated from the hearing world, having had to use sex as a form of affirmation amongst her hearing peers. The film also

portrays the endeavors of a couple's daily routine accentuated by the hearing and non-hearing divide, showing the difficulty of balancing romance, home-life, family-life, friendship and acceptance. By doing so, the film goes beyond a trivial love story, exposing mainly the difficulties of communication which arise from Sarah's reluctance in learning to speak and James's idealism in believing that by teaching her how to voice words she will feel socially included. Sarah is in fact reluctant for she believes it is no more her duty to learn to speak as it is the other people's duty to learn sign language. However, the silent world she moves in is not the world of the majority, so this puts her at a disadvantage in relation to the rest of the world. The fact that Sarah chooses not to learn how speak is a personal right, nevertheless it doesn't change the fact that the majority of social institutions are not prepared to communicate with deaf people, including schools, so the co-existence between deaf and hearing people is quite often problematic, for silence is an extension of lack of communication. When watching the film *Children of a Lesser God* one really understands the need for special education in relation to deafness ,in this case, for lip reading and sign language are basic skills for teaching hearing impaired, consequently teaching mixed classes for hearing and deaf people is still difficult to achieve. An interesting solution would be team teaching, joining a special education teacher with the teacher of the subject to promote equal learning opportunities to deaf students. This solution is not mentioned in the film, since the movie centers its attention on speech classes and the teacher's innovative techniques, consequently the audience has a clear picture of the time and the effort it takes to learn to speak without hearing sounds. One of the teacher's greatest achievements will be training their students to sing a song and dance exactly the same way hearing students do. This happening will take place at the school party before the parents of the school community. Despite James's success with his students, James will meet failure in relation to Sarah for her childhood traumas won't allow her one more try, much to the disgust of her companion.

Nevertheless, her ability to read lips and her expressive use of sign language prove to be both useful and sexy, contributing to her socialization and her feminine self-confidence. As far as her academic achievement is concerned, the film stresses that she was one of the brightest students of the school, therefore it conveys the important idea that intelligence isn't directly connected with one's handicap, an idea already portrayed in *The Miracle Worker* (1962).

Children of a Lesser God (1986) exposes the isolation of the hearing impaired and allows an allusion to the isolation of the disabled in general as well as their difficulty in social integration. The title comes from the twelfth chapter of Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, where Tennyson writes "O me! For why is all around us here / As if some lesser god had made the world / But had not force to shape it as he would". In fact these lines may synthesize the feeling of many impaired individuals whose disabilities expose them to individual and social inequality.

Over the years society has become more concerned with the rights of the handicapped, and human rights in general, nevertheless it would be naïve to state that the disabled are perfectly integrated nowadays and that the school system offers educational responses for all handicapped people. Nevertheless the culture of inclusiveness remains part of today's educational agenda, emphasizing the abilities of the handicapped instead of disregarding them or abandoning the disabled altogether.

On 26 September in 2012, the United Nations Secretary-General presented the Global Initiative on Education named *Education First*. It is in fact a historic decision that recognizes the power of education to change the world and include everybody socially. This initiative reinforces the idea of inclusiveness already stated in the *Education for All* document written and approved in Dakar at the Dakar Framework for Action Forum, in 2000, the first goal for

2015 being the expansion of early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children. From these lines it is easy to infer that educating the disabled is also a worldwide priority. For without education many, if not all, will feel *Children of a Lesser God*.

Chapter five

The Unwritten Script on School

The best film is always the one yet to come, because reality always leaves room for human imagination. In relation to school films, the challenge for a pertinent script is envisaging the most relevant questions for the future of this human institution : what are the schools of the future? What are the goals of education for the future? What do students expect from their schools in the future?

The traditional school film sub-genre has devoted itself to the narration of the most dramatic school stories, as depicted in the previous chapters, violence in schools, social disruption, teachers' persecutions, inspirational teaching/teachers, educational controversies, such ingredients are put together to construct the commonest themes and plots. From my point of view the challenge for this sub-genre will be imagining schools in the near future, featuring fictional lessons that may provide food for thought to present governments, teachers, students and parents. Despite the fact that school films in theory just appeal those in the job, blockbusters like *Dead Poets Society* remind us that schools, especially arts schools have an audience appeal. As Hargreaves points out (2000) films not only preserve visual and narrative information but also give evidence about changes in the teaching profession and contemporary educational culture. Therefore, cogitating about the future role of education in general, and schools in particular, via cinema could allow insight about the expectations of the society in relation to governments' policies and in relation to society itself. What schools for the next generations? Who are the next generations?

Hypothetically, a future school film would capture the ethos of the present generations, along with the ongoing cultural change, namely the internet revolution, the knowledge-based economy, and the new *world wide web* generation. As Ken Robinson

noticed:

As technologies race forward, economies oscillate and populations shift, so too do values and behavior. Education systems everywhere now have to contend with massive waves of cultural change on every front. Some of these are the direct features of digital culture. Mark Prensky and others make a distinction between digital natives and digital immigrants. This is not a hard and fast distinction but it does point to a significant generational shift. The proliferation of digital technologies has created what has been called the biggest generation gap since rock and roll. (Robinson, 2011:75)

An imperative of a future school script would be rethinking mass education goals in a changing world, a multi-colored, multi-ethnic, multicultural, multilingual high-tech world. What would the cultural priorities be? What interpretation of citizenship will the future generations embrace as a result of their school culture? Will education privilege the idea of national citizenship or world citizenship? How will globalization affect education? Will the dream of a planetary citizenship be confined to cyberspace? Will the emergence of a cultural cyberspace mean more culturally aware citizens?

In relation to tomorrow's schools, Richard Gerver in his book *Creating Tomorrow's Schools Today* observed that:

Schooling should be a journey which helps our young develop their interests and cultures responsibly, to see applications and development opportunities that take them beyond what they know, to inspire them to want to know more, and most importantly, to use their experiences to make positive contributions to the global communities they are part of.(Gerver,2010:16)

In other words, schools as institutions should prepare their students/citizens to create a fairer and more tolerant world, perhaps one we could call the post-postmodern world, seeking for the connections among the different areas of knowledge, the common identity marks of the human beings and respecting the diversity and uniqueness of the individuals.

A future school film should also question the human anxieties in relation to the institutional role of school in the future, analyzing educational theories and daily teaching practices in order to provide input for teacher analysis and teacher training. As Giroux, cited by Ellsmore, has pointed out:

(...) films [are] serious sources of pedagogical knowledge, giving those who train teachers opportunities to reflect on the nature of educational theory and practice and what it means for twentieth first century initial teacher training. (Ellsmore,2005)

A school film about future schools, could also question the place of higher education in the 21st century. What is the role of higher education to the present/future generations? What citizens are prepared to respond to its demands? How does education embrace its mass mission of creating better learners, better workers as well as better citizens?

As regards education and schooling, with the enhanced role for the exercise of citizen choice, rather than regulation, a growing premium is placed on the individual's capacity to exercise choice in the face of complexity. This in itself defines a demanding agenda for learning and an important criterion for judging the outcomes of schooling... the conclusion may be less that students need more civics programmes – that might anyway be learned through a variety of channels – but more the critical faculties that will allow them to be active citizens. This is one pillar of preparation for lifelong learning.³⁶

According to the OCDE document cited above, citizenship should be part of the hidden curricula, the main concern for future education should be the preparation of critical citizens who embrace the concept of lifelong learning in the era of the society of knowledge. From my point of view, citizenship is not a subject for the hidden curricula only, it is in reality an important matter that should allow a worldwide cultural overview and promote tolerance and understanding among diversity. It is important that world societies embrace this educational concept. As Jacques Delors pointed out in his report *Learning: the Treasure Within*, the educational goals of the twenty first century revolve around learning to know, learning to be, learning to live together and learning to do. Therefore imagining how schools and universities embrace these goals and work ensemble, ensuring quality and allowing individual/social continuous development should be duly equated. In other words, would it be profitable to establish inter-institutional and inter-generational lifelong knowledge exchanges? Can fiction write a foreword on this?

Last but not the least, how is assessment envisaged in the schools of the future? What

³⁶ *What Schools for the Future?* Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development. 2001.p 54

is the balance between the lessons of the past and the lessons of the present? What can be the balance between fiction and fact? What are the limits of standardization and uniformity? What is the goal of assessment in the 21st century? Select, segregate or direct and inspire? The lenses of cinema surely may anticipate a scenario from which valuable reel lessons can be extracted. For it is indeed my belief that *cinema is not just an art, a culture, but a means to knowledge*, as Jean Mitry well observed, and it is in fact a powerful source of reflection on the human condition and the role of institutions such as schools, which welcome a great number of human beings from an early age and vividly mark their journey towards active citizenship and individual cultural self-awareness. What schools for the future? What teachers for the future? What students for the future? What knowledge should be privileged? Should investigation become part of a daily school practice in order to contribute for the understanding of twenty centuries of history and culture? How can technology contribute to social inclusion, cultural awareness and learning improvement? The script is yet to be written, the pen is in our hands.

Conclusion

Film constitutes a powerful force for shaping public memory, hope, popular consciousness, and social agency and as such invites people into a broader public conversation.

Giroux

It is my firm belief that films are not only entertaining but also educational. Thus, any good film, or one which aims to arouse controversy, can raise unexpected questions and trigger a broader public conversation. Such is the case of the school film sub-genre, from which I drew the set of movies discussed and analyzed more thoroughly in the previous chapters.

My analysis focused on Anglophone film representations of school, education, teaching and learning from the thirties onwards, but it didn't follow a chronological approach. Conversely, my line of reasoning was thematic in an attempt to highlight and contrast the most universal and recurrent lessons laid bare in films about school. Hence, every film gave rise to questions which continue to be pertinent for the educational debate, not only for Anglophone communities, but hopefully also for other educational communities spread all over the world. In fact, school culture and screen culture play important educational roles in the promotion of understanding, tolerance and mutual cultural respect.

I also believe that the corpus of films investigated should be reviewed with a critical eye in order to reinterpret their *reel* lessons and assess their depth or superficiality; this effort would help to stir perennial debate around school, education, teaching and learning. This debate has been traditionally confined to the field of the education sciences and their practitioners, however it is my belief that a general interest in these matters via screen culture enriches the debate, improves knowledge, allows a trans-disciplinary vision of the educational phenomenon, since it gives specific problems greater public visibility and moves educational

policy up the political agenda to a place where something positive may be attempted by reformers.

Furthermore, I would like to stress from a phenomenological point view that the key concepts for education are relevance and diversity. Notwithstanding the epoch, all school films deal with the idea of educational relevance – curricular relevance, pedagogic relevance, personal relevance, cultural relevance, present relevance, future relevance, i.e., active learning is more effective when the content taught and how it is taught is relevant to the learner. Relevance is also directly attached to the notion of human diversity, mirroring the interests, the strengths and the weaknesses of individuals. Thus, one of the hugest challenges for the 21st century school will be finding the balance between programmatic and individual relevance; active learning will eventually emerge from the equilibrium between these two important variables. As the educationalist John Dewey pointed out:

Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time. Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned. For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future.³⁷

³⁷ Dewey, John. At: <http://faculty.mc3.edu/cgrodanz/cg-edu.htm>, 7th October, 2012.

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The Miracle Worker

(1962, USA, 146 mn)

Director: Arthur Penn

Production Company: United Artists an MGM Company

Cast: Anne Bancroft, Patty Duke

To Sir, with Love

(1967, UK, 101 mn)

Director: James Clavell

Production Company: Columbia Pictures

Cast: Sidney Poitier, Judy Geeson, Lulu, Suzy Kendall, Patricia Routledge, Chris Chittell

IF....

(1968, UK, 107 mn)

Director: Lindsay Anderson

Production Company: Paramount Pictures / A Memorial Enterprises Film

Cast: Malcolm McDowell, Christine Noonan, Richard Warwick, David Wood, Robert Swann

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie

(1969, UK, 115 mn)

Director: Ronald Neame

Production Company: Twentieth Century Fox

Cast: Maggie Smith, Robert Stephens, Pamela Franklin, Gordon Jackson, Celia Johnson

Dead Poets Society

(1989, USA, 123 mn)

Director: Peter Weir

Production: Touchstone Pictures / Silver Screen Partners IV

Cast: Robin Williams, Robert Sean Leonard, Ethan Hawke, Josh Charles, Gale Hansen, James Waterson;

Dangerous Minds

(1995, USA, 95 mn)

Director: John N. Smith

Production Company: Hollywood Pictures

Cast: Michelle Pfeiffer, Wade Domínguez, George Dzundza, Renoly Santiago, Courtney B. Vance, Lorraine Toussaint

Mona Lisa Smile

(2003, USA, 117 minutes)

Director: Mike Newell

Production: Revolution Studios & Red Om Films Productions

Cast: Julia Stiles, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Julia Roberts, Kirsten Dunst, Ginnifer, Marcia Gay Harden, Dominic West

One Eight Seven

(1997, USA, 119 mn)

Director: Kevin Reynolds

Production Company: Warner Brothers

Cast: Samuel L. Jackson, Kelly Rowan, John Heard, Tony Plana, Antwon Tanner

The Emperor's Club

(2002, USA, 95 mn)

Director: Michael Hoffman

Production Company: Universal Pictures / Beacon Pictures

Cast: Kevin Kline, Embeth Davidtz, Emile Hirsch, Rob Morrow, Edward Herrmann;

The History Boys

(2006, UK, 107 mn)

Director: Nicholas Hytner

Production Company: BBC Two Films / Fox Searchlight Pictures/ DNA films / UK
Film Council

Cast: Richard Griffiths, Frances De La Tour, Stephen Campbell Moore, Clive
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